



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

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## **Tragedies and Plots Shaped by Characters of Shakespeare and Navajo Oral Myths**

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### **Introduction**

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My fourth grade English Language Learners sometimes lacks the reading abilities for their grade level; however, I still need to teach them using fourth grade standards. Fourth grade reading standards and standardized assessment emphasize reading comprehension. Determining character trait and motivation, and plot development are the main standards that students need to learn. For my unit, I will be using Navajo Oral myths about *Changing Bear Maiden*. Using Navajo oral myths is an important component of my thematic unit because Navajo children are often exposed to these stories at home and at school. The characters in the stories of oral myths determine the course of the plots of the stories. When oral myths are retold, they are told in a way that there is little mystery involved in recognizing character traits, or character motivation. The only mystery is the outcome, usually coming with a moral to be learned. Graphic Novels with simplified English Version of *Othello* and *Taming of the Shrew* will allow the students to practice their reading comprehension. Using a familiar story and using the graphic novels to introduce the fourth graders to the world of Shakespeare will allow students to identify character traits and motivation, and how motivation changes the course of the plot. The students will compare the actions of Tingling Woman with Kate from *Taming of the Shrew*, and Coyote will be compared to the character Iago from *Othello*.

### **Background**

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Kayenta Unified School District (KUSD) is a public school deep in the center of the Navajo Reservation in Arizona. The school serves almost 2000 students, and the student population is approximately 99% Native Americans, mostly Navajos. However, most of the Navajo students are not Native Speakers of the Dine Language. Those who are Native Dine Speakers are identified as English Language Learners, and have to be serviced in English Language Development (ELD) classes after they have failed their English Proficiency Assessment. Of the 2,000 students in the Kayenta School District, only 100 are officially identified as learners of English. Most of these students are considered ELL and assessed for proficiency in English using the AZELLA (Arizona English Language Learner Assessment), based on what the family wrote on the Primary Home

Language Other Than English (PHLOTE) Form. The PHLOTE Form is what families fill out to determine what language is spoken in the home, and whether or not a student will be assessed on English Language Proficiency. The goal of ELD classrooms is to help students become fluent speakers, readers, and writers of the English Language.

The school district serves students from 7 communities within a 50 mile radius of the town of Kayenta, Arizona. Some students have to catch the bus as early as 6 am to make it to school on time. Approximately 30 buses run out to these communities and haul students to the school every day.

## Rationale

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My fourth grade ELD class lacks two important advantages, Navajo Cultural studies and comprehension. At the fourth grade level, there is a huge emphasis on developing reading comprehension skills. This is especially challenging for my fourth grade students who for the most part lack reading skills. Most of the students I teach are behind 2-3 grade levels in reading. Almost every year, I spend the first quarter of the school year re-teaching phonics, and foundational reading skills. The students also lack English Language grammar skills. In any case, despite the students' below grade level reading, by mandate reading comprehension skills do need to be developed at grade four. My unit will use various modification and graphic organizers to help students develop reading comprehension.

English has become a prevalent language on the Navajo reservation due to influences of the western society through multimedia including movies, television, music, and magazines that promote "pop" culture. Many young adults and children have grown up with English as their primary language. However, the English spoken at home is not fluent, but rather "playground" English that includes slang and makeshift broken English. Their English also uses Navajo Language patterns and parts of speech that sound incoherent to a Standard English speaker (this is called code switching). A majority of the students at the Elementary School fall into this category: their first language is English, yet it's not fluent English.

Despite the decline in the number of fluent Navajo speakers, Navajo culture is still thriving. Driving down any highway on the Navajo reservation, shepherders can be seen tending to their flocks or cowboys caring for their herds. Vendors set up shop by the side of the road to sell turquoise jewelry, or traditional food, and occasionally Navajo woven rugs, or baskets.

In my unit, I will be focusing on story, plot and character motivation as way to teach reading comprehension. I will be using Navajo Oral stories, specifically *Changing Bear Maiden*, as a foundation for my unit on Shakespeare. Many students are familiar with stories of the Navajo Oral Histories, because some parents, grandparents, and especially grandparents love to tell stories in the winter time. Many Navajo Oral Histories have numerous plots, character traits, and motivations embedded within the stories. Many of the plots and twists are traditionally used as tools for learning. I chose *Changing Bear Maiden* as the Navajo Oral story for my unit because it has numerous plots, character traits, and motivations that were very similar to those features in Shakespeare. There is love, betrayal, and tragedy involved in both stories. The maiden falls in love with Coyote despite her initial rebuff of him, but tries to hide the affair. Although Coyote had the good intention of staying married to the maiden in the beginning, he eventually betrays her by allowing himself to get killed due to his foolish behavior. The maiden's brothers have had to accept the Coyote despite their

distaste for him. When Coyote annoyed the brothers, the only thing they could do was redirect him towards his wife. Although the brothers did not kill the Coyote, the maiden believed that the brothers were somehow responsible for her husband's demise. She killed most of her brothers as part of her plan for revenge. The youngest brother however, survives and ends up killing his sister to stop her devastating rampage.

Because any Shakespeare play, whether it's *Romeo and Juliet* or any other, is complicated for any fourth grade class, I opted to use Graphic Novel versions of *Taming of the Shrew* and *Othello*. The quick text version translates the whole play into quick modern English. Since fourth grade is very early for Shakespeare, I will be using simplified English Version of the graphic novels. Although the graphics novels do not have the original text from the play, they do retain the most important plot twists, and character traits and motivations. These characteristics of the graphic Novels will allow students to have better comprehension. For the visual learners, as well as for students who are not familiar with the setting, the graphics enhances the stories by showing the characters in action.

Three types of graphic organizers will be used to help students with comprehension. The first graphic organizer will be a Venn diagram. The Venn diagram will help students compare and contrast the two stories. The second graphic organizer is a character trait and motivation chart. This chart organizes a character's action to determine their motivation. The third chart is the story element chart to determine the plot development in each story.

## Navajo Oral History

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Bear Maiden is a story told from Navajo creation myths. Navajo creation myths are symbolic narratives steeped in oral traditions and cultures expressed through stories and songs. The songs and stories are ideal vehicles for addressing the Navajo central viewpoint, and a framework for self-identity that sustains the traditional Navajo way of life. Navajo oral stories are sacred accounts of characters and the plots they motivate. The narratives involve interactions among deities, human-like figures, and animals going through trials and errors. Navajo creation stories are conveyed verbally from one generation to the next.

Navajo creation stories basically retell the Navajo emergence story. They retell the story of the deities and other beings including the Coyote moving through four different worlds. The coyote is a central character in numerous creation stories, the one who constantly tests the boundaries of possibilities and order. He is an important character who is often revered, but often also considered irresponsible and trouble making. He can either be funny or fearsome, and often greedy, vain, foolish, cunning, and possessed of some degree of power. He is characterized as a trickster.

## Bear Maiden

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Bear Maiden was known for her beauty and her demure composure among the Holy People. She was the only sister of 12 divine brothers. During the first part of the story, she was known as Tingling Women because of the sounds the deer hooves, which adorned her dress, made when she moved. Many Holy People including the

Sun Bearer sought marriage with this fair maiden. Many times, she rejected proposals of marriage because her admirers could not pass any of the tests she made them undertake as conditions for marriage. The Coyote heard about her beauty and about the impossible conditions and tests she expected her admirers to perform. Coyote took this as a challenge.

### **Coyote Marries the Maiden**

Tingling Woman looked at the coyote with scorn and was not impressed with him. She tried to chase him away, but he was persistent with his proposal for marriage. He promised to be a good husband by doing chores such as bringing in wood and water. He often praised her for her fine qualities and beauty. Although the maiden was not interested in Coyote, she challenged him with her first condition, just to be rid of him. The first condition for becoming a husband to the maiden was to kill Giant. Furthermore, the contender had to bring back the giant's quiver and scalp as proof. In truth, killing the giant was an impossible task. The Coyote sat there for a moment and eventually left and went home. Bear Maiden went about her business thinking that was the end of the Coyote.

Because he could not sleep, Coyote headed to the top of Continental Divide to visit Giant. Because the giant was huge and clumsy, he often walked very slowly. The coyote decided to use this physical attribute to trick the giant. Giant's main staple for his diet was humans. Often he did not have trouble catching his food because the humans froze with fright when they saw his massive size. However, he was still intrigued by Coyote's proposal. The Coyote promised Giant that he had the power to use herbal potions and magic that would help the giant move faster, and enhance his ability to catch more food. So Giant built a fire for a sweat lodge. In the meantime, Coyote mixed a potion, and located a fresh leg of a deer. When they went into the sweat lodge, the two beings drank the herbal potion. The potion made the giant nauseated and woozy. While under the influence, Coyote showed how he used magic to help him run fast. Coyote explained that he had to rid himself of his old legs by cutting them off, and then reattach them with magic. Because it was dark inside the sweat lodge, Coyote had Giant feel his legs before he made a cut. When he cut the meat and broke the bone of the deer apart, Coyote moaned and groaned pretending that he was in pain. He had Giant feel the broken bone and flesh to prove that he was not playing any games. He finally chanted, made spitting sounds, and pretended to reattach his legs. Coyote convinced Giant that is how he renews his legs to maintain his speed. The more the giant listened to Coyote, the more he wanted to be fast, so he agreed to have the coyote perform the ritual. The coyote cut off both of the giant's legs, and told him to spit on them while he chanted. Coyote snickered and ran out of the sweat lodge yelling that there was no such magic that would grow bones back together in one day. When the giant lunged after Coyote, he clubbed him dead, and collected the scalp. Coyote was sure he would make an impression on the maiden when he walked in with the evidence.

### **The Maiden Kills the Coyote**

However, when he returned to the maiden, she was not impressed with Coyote, and still looked at him with disdain. She was not convinced the quiver and the scalp belonged to Giant. About that time, Badger appeared at the doorsteps of the maiden, and it occurred to coyote that he had also proposed marriage. Just to get rid of the two admirers, she proposed that both men hunt the following day. She promised that she would marry whichever of them brought her the largest bundle of meat. Coyote knew the Badger had short feet so he prayed for snow so he could have an advantage. The following day, there was a thick blanket of snow on the ground, and the Coyote thought he had the upper hand for this challenge. He was only successful in scaring away the rabbits back into their burrows. By midday, he only managed to dig up two hairless rabbits because he twisted and turned them too much trying to dig them out of their burrows with a stick. The Badger, on the

other hand, was more experienced and more skilled at hunting. He dug up the rabbits from the burrows with ease. He soon accumulated a huge pile of rabbit meat to present to the maiden. When the Coyote saw this, he realized he was losing badly, so when Badger started digging for another rabbit, the coyote quickly closed up the entrance of the burrows with rocks and boulders. He then collected Badger's pile of meat, claimed it for himself, and presented them to the maiden. He left behind his measly hairless damaged rabbits for Badger. Although Coyote brought back an impressive amount of meat, the maiden did not wish to declare him as the winner. The maiden insisted on waiting for Badger or for sunset to make a decision. Eventually Badger showed up with the two hairless rabbits, so the maiden said she could not make up her mind. Badger was frustrated at the lack of interest from the maiden, so he prepared the two measly rabbits for himself, and excused himself from pursuing her any further.

The following day, Coyote was back so Tingling Woman presented him with the next condition. She stated that she would marry him only if she killed him four times and he came back to life each time. Before Coyote accepted the challenge, he asked to be excused to think it over. Again, the maiden thought she had finally got rid of the coyote. However, Coyote had other plans. While he was pretending to think, he used evil magic to remove his heart and lungs, and hid them in a burrow. When he came back to the Hogan, Coyote provoked the maiden to kill him. She was frustrated with him so she grabbed him by the back of the neck, dragged him to a cliff, and clubbed him to death without any sympathy or remorse, and returned to her home. After some time passed, the Coyote showed up at her Hogan and announced, "That was one!" The second time, she dragged him to a higher cliff, clubbed him, and cut him into pieces, and scattered him on the ground. Not too long afterwards, the Coyote showed up at the Maiden's house again. She was completely irritated by this time. This time she dragged him out to a steeper cliff, clubbed him, cut him into small pieces, and scattered him in different directions before she headed home. The Coyote returned within seconds of closing the door. The fourth time, she dragged him to the cliff, clubbed him, cut him into pieces, and ground his flesh into the earth, then scattered him in all directions. He was at her door before she could close it. The maiden was overwhelmed by this time, but she did not show it. So when the coyote declared he was the winner, he wanted to get married right away. The Maiden still despised the coyote and didn't want to get married to him. So she explained that it was customary for Coyote to ask for permission from her brothers before the union.

However, the brothers had not returned from their hunting trip by night fall. Coyote was not going to wait for the brothers so he vowed on spending the night. He insisted that a maiden should not be alone on a cold winter night. He promised to behave himself so he set up his bedding by the doorway. However, that night was an especially cold winter night, so he ended sitting by the fire and burning all the fuel. When the fire died out, he started to shiver when the cold air took over the Hogan. He was desperate so he proposed to the maiden to allow him to sleep by her feet with a little blanket covering his body. Every few minutes he inched closer to the maiden. Eventually, he seduced the maiden into becoming his wife. The following morning, she cooked for him, and he helped with chores around the house. She had a lot of meat in storage, but soon she used up all her savings to keep her husband satisfied. She was constantly distracted by her husband, that she soon started neglecting her chores and duties. When she heard her brothers returning home, she became frightened. Instead of introducing her husband, she hid him behind bundles of goods.

### **Brothers Return**

When the brothers returned, they were baffled by the state of the house. The house was not kept like that before; there was no fire for warmth, and food was not prepared to welcome the brothers' return home. The eldest brother ordered the brothers to start a fire, but once the heat from the fire started warming up the house, they noticed a stench of coyote urine in the air. The brothers believed that the smell of coyote urine

came from the firewood, so the eldest brother gave command to extinguish the fire and build a new fire with wood chopped from the lower branches of a tree. When the heat from the new fire warmed up the house, the odor returned. Again, the eldest brother insisted on building a new fire. This time, he demanded that the firewood needed to be chopped from higher up the tree. However, the stench of coyote urine continued to permeate the house with the new fire. On the fourth attempt, the eldest brother became frustrated and started swearing and cursing the coyote. He demanded that the brothers needed to chop off the highest branches, where he was certain the coyote did not spray his urine. When the Coyote heard the eldest brother, he was offended so he jumped out from where he was hidden and revealed that he was now their in-law. The brothers felt ashamed and embarrassed by the new development. However, there was nothing the brothers could do about it. The sister prepared a small meal, and everyone ate in silence while the coyote urine continued to permeate in the air. Out of respect for the newlyweds, the brothers left the house and built another shelter to live in. The brothers were still suspicious of Coyote's intent and antics, so they assigned the youngest brother to spy on his sister and the Coyote. He observed many things that Coyote was teaching Tingling Woman.

### **Brothers Take Coyote on a Hunting Trip**

Several days later, the brothers had to go out for another hunting trip. When Coyote heard the news, he insisted on going on this excursion with the brothers. The brothers did not want the coyote to go with them, and tried to convince him that his place was now by their sister's side to perform a husband's duties, such as bringing in firewood and water. Now that Coyote was the sister's husband, they no longer had to worry about her when they left her behind. The coyote could not be dissuaded from going with the brothers, and he contended that he would be helpful in chasing the rams towards the hunters. The brothers had to take him.

In the first attempt, the coyote chased a couple of rams towards the hunters and enabled their first kill. It was a custom for the trophy to go to the hunter who made the kill. So when one of the brothers killed the rams, he claimed the horns of the rams as his trophy. The fatty marrows of the horns were considered a delicacy. However, the coyote disputed the claim. He argued that the claim belonged to him because he chased the rams towards them in the first place. The eldest brothers reasoned that the claim went to the hunter who made the kill, not the tracker. The brother also insulted the Coyote by insisting that he should behave like a man and honor the custom. Instead of disputing with them anymore, the Coyote cast a spell on the horns by turning them completely into bone.

The brothers were aware of his mischief, but they knew they could not kill their in-law, so they opted to send him home with the meat from the two rams. Using magic, the brothers bundled up the meat into small packages. They instructed the Coyote to take it directly home, and told him he could not put down the package for any reason. When the Coyote reassured them that he understood the directions, they sent him on his way. Before long, he decides to take a break and put down the package. When he did that, some of the magic wore off and the bundle expanded and became heavier. With some effort, he still managed to pick up the package and continued on his way home. After a short time, he felt like he needed another break. Again, the package expanded and became heavier. This time, the Coyote had a hard time picking up the package, so he crawled around a bit, but he still managed to continue on his journey. A short time later, the package became unbearable so he took another break. This time, he could not pick up the package anymore, so he took out some of the meat and left it on the branches of a tree. He still could not pick up the package and walk with it, but he managed to crawl with it. After a short distance, he felt he needed another break, so he put the package down and caused it to completely come undone. Instead of attempting to bundle it back up, he just decorated a tree with the remainder of the meat.

## **People Kill Coyote**

Instead of going directly home, he spied some holy people playing a game at the bottom of a canyon. He started antagonizing and mocking the holy people from the top of the cliff. He managed to insult the people and alienated himself by bragging about succeeding in marrying the most beautiful maiden ever, and how everyone was ugly compared to her. The holy people were tired of the coyote's arrogant and conceited attitude, so they decided to kill him. The Spider people set up four traps with their webs, and signaled the other holy people that they were ready with the trap. As soon as the signal was given, the holy people chased Coyote towards the trap. The coyote ran through the first trap with ease, and continued to boast. The people had no chance of catching up with him. While the holy people continued to chase him, he continued to taunt the holy people about how he was successful and they were failures. The second trap was stronger than the first web and was a little harder to get through, but he still managed to get through before the people caught up with him. However, the people made progress because Coyote struggled with the stronger web. The third web was yet sturdier so it was harder for Coyote to get through, but he still managed to get away from the people. However, this time, the people almost caught him. The Coyote could not escape the last trap, and the people overtook him. The people finally killed off the coyote. This time, he did not manage to have time to hide his heart and lungs, so he could not come back to life.

## **Maiden Seeks Revenge for Husband**

Meanwhile, the hunting party came home without Coyote. The maiden asked after her husband, but the brothers didn't know where he was. They tried to tell the maiden that they sent him home with a bundle of meat, and should be home, but the sister did not believe her brothers. So she went out and started tracking her husband. She tracked him to where he left the meat. From there, she tracked him to where the holy people killed him.

When she came home, she started preparing herself to go after the holy people. She called on the power of darkness to help her turn into a bear. Before she turned herself into a bear, she hid her heart and lungs in a burrow, just the way Coyote had taught her. Then she went after the holy people to exact revenge. She spent the whole day slaying the holy people who killed her husband. She went out four days in a row to kill as many of them as she could. No matter how many times she was struck by arrows, she did not die. Each time she came home, she spent the night treating and healing her wounds. In the meantime, the holy people retreated to the caves in the cliffs on the canyon walls to escape the Bear Maiden. She still managed to kill the holy people who moved to soft sandstone cliffs by digging a burrow in the sandstones. The holy people who retreated into caves in dense cliffs survived.

In the meantime, the brothers knew they would be next, so they prepared to leave. The brothers decided to scatter into four cardinal directions, except for the youngest brother. The other brothers dug a hole under the fire pit, and hid the youngest brother in the hole. They covered up the hole with a slab of rock and left.

When the bear maiden returned, she realized the brothers had left and started tracking them. She tracked three brothers to the east and killed them. She tracked the others who fled in the different directions, and killed them as well. The only one that was left was the youngest brother. She tracked him, but could not find him anywhere. She tracked and tracked, but could not track him in any particular direction. She finally realized that he must be nearby, so she started digging around, and alas found him hidden in the hole under the fire pit.

## Youngest Brother Kills Sister

The Bear Maiden tried to coax the little brother out of the hole in the ground and offered her hand, but he jumped out with his own strength. The Bear Maiden tried to maneuver her brother around so she could kill him from behind. She was talking sweetly and offering to comb his hair to remove the lice as a way to make him turn away from her. The brother agreed to have his sister groom her, but he made sure he sat away from the light so he could see her shadow. Each time the Bear Maiden tried to turn into the bear, the little brother would turn around and ask what she was doing. This went on for a while, until the little brother made a mad dash for his bow and arrow. Once he did that, he continued out the door and ran for the burrow where he had witnessed his sister hiding her heart and lungs. He shot an arrow through her heart and lungs and killed her in her tracks.

## Shakespeare

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William Shakespeare was an Englishman born to a leather merchant and Mary Arden, a local land heiress, on April 1564 in Stratford-Upon-Avon. John Shakespeare was a successful merchant who held official positions as an alderman, and later on as a bailiff. William Shakespeare, 18 years old, married 26 year old Anne Hathaway on November 28, 1582. They had three children together.

William Shakespeare was a major poet who was credited with writing 2 popular narrative poems, 154 sonnets, and 40 plays. He earned a living as an actor who was a member of Lord of Chamberlain's Men Company, later renamed King's Men. He published his first narrative poem in 1593.

Early on, William Shakespeare did not write in the conventional style of the day with elaborate metaphors and rhetoric that didn't sound natural, nor had anything to do with the plot or characters in the story. He started changing this traditional style soon wrote in a variety of styles. Some of his earlier work was history plays and comedies, with the exception of *Romeo and Juliet*. Later on, his plays included tragedies based on human temperaments that drove the twists and turns of the plots that often destroyed the hero.

## Taming of the Shrew

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A wealthy merchant of Padua by the name of Baptista had two daughters. The youngest daughter had suitors who were ready to marry her, but Baptista declared that Bianca would not get marry unless Katherina married first. Katherina had no suitors because she had a strong personality often mistaken for shrewishness. One of Bianca's suitors devised a plan to pursue her by sneaking into the household as a tutor. A friend who came to visit one of the suitors was intrigued by Katherina's wealth, so he agreed to woo her. Petruchio was intrigued with Katherina so a marriage was arranged. Through various deceptions and ruses, Petruchio was able to tame Katherina. In the end, Katherina was able to redefine her responsibility and embrace wifely duties.

## Othello

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Othello, a Moorish general of Venice, promoted Cassio as a lieutenant over Iago. Iago started plotting revenge against both Othello and Cassio by using Desdemona, the new bride of Othello, as a means to carry out his plans. When Othello transfers to Cyprus, Iago transports Desdemona there and sets his plans into motion. He uses a former suitor of Desdemona to pick a fight with a drunken Cassio. This fiasco demotes Cassio, but Iago assures him that he is certain he would get his position back if he talked to Desdemona. However, Iago uses Cassio's meeting with Desdemona to plant the suggestion of an affair between them in Othello's mind. In the meantime, Iago gets his hands on Desdemona's special handkerchief, and plants it in Cassio's room. Not knowing where it came from, Cassio gives the handkerchief to an admirer. Othello's suspicion of Desdemona's infidelity mounts when he asks about the handkerchief, and she responds that it was lost. The intensity of Othello's rage increases when he misinterprets the topic of a conversation between Cassio and Iago as being about Desdemona, instead of Cassio's admirer. Othello vows to have Cassio killed and angrily confronts Desdemona. Othello's jealousy could not be curbed despite Desdemona's protest of innocence. When Roderigo fails to kill Cassio, Iago kills Roderigo so he would not associate him with the chaos. Emilia, Iago's wife and Desdemona's attendant cries murder when she discovers that Othello has strangled Desdemona. Eventually Emilia pieces together the puzzle and blames her husband, Iago, as the cause of the tragedy. Iago stabs his wife to death and tries to escape as soon as she has told the truth about the handkerchief. More evidence mounts against Iago when letters are found on Roderigo implicating Iago. Othello stabs himself to death when he realizes that he has killed an innocent Desdemona.

## Comparing the Characters

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What is a character? How are characters important in a story? How do the actions of the characters shape the plot in the story? Comprehension is a huge part of learning for fourth grade standards, and one of the objectives of this unit is to understand that characters have traits, actions have motivations, and motivations can change the plot of the story. With this unit I am planning on comparing the Navajo Oral Creation story about Bear Maiden and Coyote with characters in *Taming of the Shrew*, and *Othello*. The characters in both stories have motivations that influence the outcome of the plot. The interesting thing here is that the male characteristic traits are consistent throughout the stories. However, the characteristics of both the Tingling Woman and Katharina change drastically—while for that matter the character of Desdemona seems to change in Othello's eyes.

The main characters I will focus on for this unit are Bear Maiden and Coyote, comparing and contrasting their traits and motivations with those of Kate in *Taming of Shrew* and Iago in *Othello*. The objective of the unit is that the students will not only compare and contrast character traits, but learn that motivation is a powerful tool for changing the course of action of the characters.

The lesson will begin with introducing the female characters. First I will read the section of the Bear Maiden where she is being courted by the coyote. Although the Tingling Woman had numerous admirers, she had no interest in marrying any of them. She often challenged her admirers with impossible tasks to keep them at bay. The pertinent characteristic of Tingling Woman is that she is an independent strong woman who was

happy in her current state. In Navajo culture and history, it was the custom to marry off young women at a young age to any man who would present a dowry. The woman was expected to be docile and obedient to her husband, and to become completely devoted to her husband. He comes first before her family, and becomes the single most important individual in her life. A woman creates a home life that includes taking care of the husband by cooking for and feeding him, keeping the household clean, and bearing children for her husband. Taming Woman's duty and devotion before she succumbed to the Coyote had been to her brothers, but then to the Coyote after she has married him. How is this similar to and different from the character of Kate in *Taming of the Shrew*?

The following excerpt from *Taming of the Shrew* gives a small but powerful glimpse of the characteristics of Kate.

*Baptista.* Gentlemen, importune me no farther,

For how I firmly am resolved you know,

That is, not to bestow my youngest daughter

Before I have a husband for the elder.

If either of you both love Katherina,

Because I know you well and love you well,

Leave shall you have to court her at your pleasure.

*Gremio.* To cart her rather. She's too rough for me.

There, there, Hortensio, will you any wife?

*Kate.* I pray you, sir, is it your will

To make a stale of me amongst these mates?

*Hortensio.* Mates, maid? How mean you that? No mates for you

Unless you were of gentler, milder mold.

*Kate.* I' faith, sir, you shall never need to fear:

Iwis it is not halfway to her heart.

But if it were, doubt not her care should be

To comb your noddle with a three-legged stool

And paint your face and use you like a fool.

*Hortensio.* From all such devils, good Lord deliver us!<sup>1</sup>

Like the Tingling Woman, Kate is a strong independent woman who has no interest in marriage. However, marriage was imperative for young ladies. The pressure to get married for Kate was more for the sake of cultural expectations than for the betterment of her situation. Kate used her hot tempered and aggressive nature as a defense. She often spoke her mind and was not afraid to argue her point. Her defense was what kept any chance of having a male suitor unlikely. These would be some of the observations I would like my students to make after watching a clip of the Elizabeth Taylor movie with the excerpt from the play. Because these are fourth graders, I would not expect them to understand the excerpt from Shakespeare. We will read the passage from the graphic novel. The graphic novel I selected is transcribed into modern plain English, the type of English narrative that my fourth grade ELL students will be able to comprehend. Then we will go back and discuss what kind of characteristics they believe that Kate has, and what are some possible motivations. Other questions may include, is she interested in marriage? Why or why not? Then the students will watch the clip with the previous excerpt from *Taming of the Shrew*. I will ask them again what words in the passage might suggest her characteristics and motivations. Once the students establish character traits and motivation, I will read them the beginning story of Maiden Bear, when she was still known as Tingling Woman. Once I read them that section, the students will discuss how Tingling Woman is similar to and how she is different from Kate. What characteristics do they share? Are their motivations similar?

Although the Tingling Woman had numerous admirers, she had no interest in marrying any of them. She often challenged her admirers with impossible tasks to keep them at bay. In *Taming of Shrew*, Kate like the bear maiden was not interested in marriage. The characteristic she used for her defense was to be hot tempered and aggressive. These are characteristics of the two maids that will be explored. Although their characteristics are quite different, the bottom line is that both ladies did not want to be married and used different defenses to keep admirers at bay.

When the two ladies decided after all that they did want to get married, that created an opening for to how to 'tame' them. With both ladies, their defenses were completely shattered by characters with whom, at the beginning they were not in love, but characters who loved the idea of winning a challenge owing to their own set of motivations.

When the two ladies do get "tamed," how do their traits differ from those they had at the beginning? More evidence of the characteristics of both the Tingling Woman and Kate will be explored as we read Saddleback's Illustrated Classics of *Taming of the Shrew*. At the end of the story, are they still the same? How did Tingling Woman completely change by the time her story ends?

The other characters I want to compare are Coyote in Bear Maiden story, and Iago of *Othello*. These characters are more complex than their female counterparts, but are more transparent in their intent. Iago and Coyote have traits that are devious in nature from the beginning all the way to the end of their stories. The motivation of Iago is revenge arising from envy. His devious nature allows him to plot and move the others as pawns as though they were on a chess board. A sociopath, he had no qualms about who he hurt or who he used to plot his revenge. His ultimate goal was to destroy Othello. Coyote is also devious, but at the beginning of the story he uses cunning without malice to trick Tingling Woman into becoming his wife. Once he had his wife, his characteristics and motivation then became foolishly boastful, and that got him killed.

## Strategies/Activities

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### Using Familiar Story

Most Navajo children grew up listening to their parents, grandparents, and the Navajo Culture Teacher tell stories from Navajo Oral myths, especially about the mischief of Coyote. In most oral myths, the antics of Coyote are used to teach morals. I specifically chose oral myths as an opener to my lesson plan because children are familiar with the characteristic traits of Coyote. Most stories about Coyote also have many plot twists and turns to develop the story using conflicts, building climax, and character action that resolves the conflict. When I am teaching my unit, I will keep referring back to the story of *Bear Maiden* to help guide students and help them develop their comprehension skills through understanding of character traits and motivation, and plot events.

### Character Traits and Motivation

Using familiar stories is practical for discussing character traits and motivations. Fourth Grade ELL learners are expected to describe the characters' traits and their motivations in a fictional text. The strategy is to use a Character Trait and Motivation chart to help students understand what a character is like, together with his or her thoughts and actions. I will explain that a reader can tell what kind of person a character is by thinking about his or her traits. Traits show what a character is like. The motivation of a character is defined as the reasons the character acts in a certain way. Students need to understand that sometimes authors or storytellers state a character's motivation, but sometimes the reader or listener must determine motivation using what the character says, does, and thinks as clues.

As a whole class, I will guide the students to determine character traits and motivation when considering Tingling Woman and the Coyote. After we read the first section of Tingling Woman, I will guide students through a think aloud about the traits of Tingling Woman. I will ask students guiding questions that specifically focus on what Tingling Woman is like, why she says no to marriage, and how she reacts to Coyote. In pairs, students will discuss character traits and motivation of Tingling Woman. I will walk around the classroom to guide them by asking about Tingling Woman's action, and what her action says about her trait, and about her motivation. As the discussion progresses, I will help students fill in character traits and motivations. Throughout the unit, the students will practice determining character traits of Coyote from the *Bear Maiden* story, Iago from *Othello*, and Kate and Bianca from *Taming of the Shrew*.

Comparing and contrasting two or more characters within a fictional text is another skill that Fourth Grade ELL students are expected to acquire. This demand requires students to use higher level thinking in coming to understand the following characters: Tingling Woman, Bianca, and Kate. The guiding questions for this part are: *How is Tingling Woman like Kate? How is she like Bianca? Is Tingling Woman more like Kate or Bianca at the beginning of the story?* Students will reread parts of the *Taming of the Shrew* and *Bear Maiden*. Students will also use the Character Traits and Motivations charts from the previous lessons. With the charts side by side, students will use think aloud to discuss the similarities and differences between the characters; first between Tingling Woman and Kate, and then between Tingling Woman and Bianca. Then, the students will determine whether or not Tingling Woman is more like Kate or Bianca. Students will have to support their conclusion with details from the text or from the chart.

## Plots

Another Fourth Grade ELL Proficiency Standard is to help students analyze text to identify and describe the plot (specific events, problems and solutions) from a fictional text. Using oral myths is especially useful for teaching plot twists. The story of Bear Maiden involves many plot twists. In this lesson, I will use Character, Setting, and Plot graphic organizer and plot outline. I will explain to students that characters are people or animals in a story, and setting describes when and where a story takes place. Knowing who the characters are in a story and where the story takes place will help students understand events in a plot. I will define the plot as the series of events in a story. I will explain that the characters, the setting, and the plot work together to tell a story. Sometimes, the setting, and especially the characters affect the plot events.

The plot outline is a five part structure. The first part is the introduction, where the main characters, the setting, and relationships are established. The introduction is followed by rising action. The rising action refers to an event or action that enables the plot to develop. The main character is faced with a seemingly tricky situation which worsens as the story develops because the character has yet to cultivate skills to deal with the problem. This leads to the climax. The climax is a plot event that defines the main tension in the story. The climax is the turning point of the story and is meant to be the moment of highest interest and excitement. This is when characters define themselves with a new sense of who they really are. The falling action is where the character's action leads to events that point to an ending. Finally, the resolution is the how the story's conflict is brought to an end.

In this lesson, the students will use the plot outline to determine the plot of all the stories in the unit with guidance from me. I will guide students to certain events in the story to help them determine where they belong on the plot outline. For example, in *Othello*, who are the main characters, which of them are creating the conflict, why are they creating the conflict? How does it affect the plot? What are the events that lead up to the climax? What is the climax in the story? What was the resolution? As the students discuss these questions through buddy talk and think aloud, I will write down the information they offer on the plot outline.

To develop higher level thinking in the students, we will expand the lesson on plot events in the stories for the unit. For example, I would expand the lesson on plot events for *Othello* by asking the students questions about specific events in the story: *Suppose Iago had been promoted to lieutenant? Suppose Iago hadn't made Cassio drunk? Suppose Iago hadn't obtained the handkerchief?* How would these altered circumstances have changed the outcome of the story? With guidance, students will rewrite the plot outline. This will help students understand that character choices help determine the events of the plots.

## Rewrite the Ending

In this activity, students will rewrite the ending of *Taming of the Shrew* so it will have a similar ending to that of *Maiden Bear*. In *Maiden Bear*, the maiden took revenge on her brothers after her husband was killed. The youngest brother was the one who stopped his sister. First, using the plot outline from Bear Maiden, students will develop a story board for *Maiden Bear* from the time her husband was killed to her demise. Students will be guided to determine the main points. The rising action and conflict would be the steps she takes to find out about her missing husband. The characters she chooses to kill in revenge would be part of the rising action. The climax would be finding her youngest brother and her intent to kill him. The falling action and resolution would be how the youngest brother persevered by outsmarting and killing his sister. The students will be guided by the following question as they rewrite the ending for *Taming of the Shrew*: *How would Kate react if Petruchio were killed? Whom would she take revenge on?* Using the *Bear Maiden* storyboard as a guide, students will create a new ending for Kate's story, supposing that Petruchio is killed. What would the rising

action look like? Which characters would Kate kill off? What would be the climax of the new ending? Who will be the hero that saves the family? Would it be Bianca? Where would Bianca hide? How would she outwit her sister? From this lesson I want students to use what they learned about character traits and actions, and then plot events so as to determine the plot for the new ending.

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## Note

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1. Taming of the Shrew, 1.1.48-66

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