



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2009 Volume I: Writing, Knowing, Seeing

Technology and Shakespeare: Writing, Researching, Knowing

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Students will study vision, interpretation and action in the plays *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*. Through textual analysis and writing, students explore the intersection of seeing and knowing. In the current technological age, it is of growing importance that we think critically about what is presented to us via the Internet, the cell phone, and television. My eleventh- and twelfth-grade students utilize these forms of communication daily. I intend to use classic literature to draw a connection between what we see, how we interpret it, and how we react to it. Using *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* as the central texts, the class will evaluate how the characters Hamlet and Macbeth base their actions on visions that may or may not be valid. In the cases of Hamlet and Macbeth, the decisions they make based on what they see have grave results. Through exploration of these characters, students will evaluate how vision can be problematic for them as well. The saturation of technology in these students' lives requires them to evaluate the quality, validity, and at times the safety of what is presented to them. They often act on what they see, and if they do not do so in an analytical and ethical fashion, their actions may be harmful to themselves or others. Examples range from spreading a hurtful, inaccurate rumor to being accused of trafficking child pornography through "sexting." Therefore, this three-week unit helps students become critical viewers when it comes to technology and critical readers when it comes to literature.

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