



Yale-New Haven
Teachers Institute®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2016 Volume I: Shakespeare and the Scenes of Instruction

Breaking the Rules in Shakespeare

Guide for Curriculum Unit 16.01.02
by Briana Lavonne Bellinger-Dawson

This unit will focus on the transgressive behavior of characters from some of Shakespeare's most famous plays and how we can identify with those actions. This unit is designed to help students bridge the gap between Shakespearean literature and modern life. Many times we find ourselves saying the wrong thing to someone, something that might sound offensive; and even if we didn't mean it, the next necessary step is to consider how we get out of that situation. In modern life, we create transgressive behavior just as did Shakespeare's characters. The plays we will focus on in this unit are *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Henry IV part 1*. Students will be asked to identify the transgressive behavior, to discuss the significance of who owns it, how he or she got into the situation, and how the scene might alternatively play out. Students will be asked to create parallel moments in contemporary contexts and to incorporate the Shakespeare line in their alternative contexts. This unit will suggest the use of vocabulary lists per each play, summaries of each story, character maps, as well as background information on the writer himself.

(Developed for Dramatic Arts, grades 5-8; recommended for Dramatic Arts/Theatre, English Literature, Language Arts, grades 9-12)

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