



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1991 Volume IV: Recent American Poetry: Expanding the Canon

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## Working with Shakespeare—the Poet and Dramatist

Guide for Curriculum Unit 91.04.10  
by Maggie Roberts

During the fifth century B.C. Greek poets wrote plays which contained elements so fundamental to dramatic form that they are still considered essential to a well written play. During the Elizabethan age, William Shakespeare studied these plays and reinterpreted the structure and dramatic elements to create plays which captivated the audiences of his day. In this unit we will study portions of “Antigone,” “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” and “The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet” to learn about dramatic elements and poetic forms.

I have divided this unit into three areas. I will begin by introducing students to the basic elements of dramatic structure. They will each write their own prologue. They will begin to act as members of the chorus and stage their own presentations. Next we will explore comedy. Students will create their own characters. They will become actively involved with theater production and structure as they work with improvisations. Finally, students will develop their abilities to write dramatically and poetically using a variety of forms.

By reminding students that the Greeks and Shakespeare were not so different from the playwrights and screen writers of today I hope they will find themselves feeling like detectives, watching for clues, linking the past to the present.

(Recommended for English and Drama, grades 7-12)

### **Key Words**

*Drama Ancient Greek Elements Greece Literature Comedy Tragedy Elizabethan Poetry Sonnets Shakespeare William Midsummer Night’s Dream Romeo Juliet*

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