

Designing Effective Projects: Characteristics of Projects Inside Projects: Grades 9-12

***Romeo and Juliet*: Insight Into Ourselves: A 9-12, Language Arts Project**

Students use *Romeo and Juliet* to look at personal responsibility, an individual's freedom of choice, and the effect of one's actions on others. You may want to print this page as you view the entire [Romeo and Juliet Unit Plan](#).

Student-Centered

The project is made relevant to students' lives with the Essential Question: *How does literature help us better understand ourselves?* Students read and analyze *Romeo and Juliet*, research and compare themes and issues within the play to modern life, develop solutions to these issues, and create products to share their work with a chosen audience. Students make many choices and complete many tasks, including an action plan for individualized accountability.

Alignment with Standards

Literary analysis is often part of the ninth-grade language arts curriculum and addresses state and district standards. The unit involves key language arts topics such as character analysis, literary devices, research, and writing.

Important Questions

The Essential Question and Unit Questions lead to interesting discussions that have relevance beyond the classroom. The Essential Question, *How does literature help us better understand ourselves?* helps students think broadly about the role of literature and connects the unit content to their own lives. Content Questions such as, *What are the themes and issues in Romeo and Juliet that are relevant to today?*, prompt students to think about relevant facts and information that lead to the higher-level questions. Students revisit the Essential Question periodically throughout the unit in discussions and reflections. This not only gives the students opportunities to think about the content at higher levels but gives the teacher information on the students' understanding of the content and ways in which they can direct and redirect their teaching.

Multiple and Ongoing Assessments

Assessment is ongoing throughout the unit. Typical assessments are used, such as quizzes and a final test on plot development, literary devices, characters, and so forth. The action plan document helps to spot-check progress throughout the unit. The project rubric evaluates the culminating project, with adjustments to the group score based on individual effort and contribution.

Authentic Work

The students make real-world connections through the Essential Question, which asks them to consider how literature can help them to better understand themselves. They investigate age-old problems that are still pertinent in modern-day life. Students choose a particular social offense and research the current needs and resources of the community and determine a course of action. They write and create oral presentations and supplementary products with a particular audience in mind.

Demonstrations of Learning

Students deliver a presentation and create supplementary products such as a brochure, a multimedia presentation, or a Web site. Their products show an understanding of the conflicts in *Romeo and Juliet* and their analogy to modern-day social issues. The products are intrinsically engaging and authentic to the task.

Technology-Enhanced Learning

Students prioritize social offenses and evaluate criteria to make decisions with the *Visual Ranking Tool*. Students use technology to create their supplemental product to go with their presentations. Teams choose to create a brochure, a multimedia presentation, or a Web site depending on the needs of their audience. Students conduct research online to investigate the current needs and resources of the community and to gather background information about Shakespeare, his time, and Elizabethan theater.

Higher-Order Thinking Skills

While reading the play, students investigate and gather information about Shakespearean writing and synthesize the information to make analogies to modern-day life. Students use knowledge and take what they have learned from their research and apply it to developing solutions to age-old problems. Teams compare and evaluate information to make decisions using the online *Visual Ranking Tool*. The teacher elevates student thinking with Curriculum-Framing Questions during classroom discussions throughout the unit. Students use higher-level thinking to demonstrate their understanding of the Essential and Unit Questions in their final oral presentations and products.

Varied Instructional Strategies

- **Prior Knowledge:** A series of activities introduces the unit and help students draw upon their prior knowledge. The teacher uses questioning to spark a discussion centered on the Essential Question: *How does literature help us better understand ourselves?* Students then rank a list of social offenses that are found within *Romeo and Juliet*. They discuss and decide which issues they think are serious problems today. They build upon ideas shared in these initial discussions throughout the investigation of the Essential Question.
- **Graphic Organizers:** Visual organizers are incorporated throughout the unit. The unit begins with a group and class-created list to accompany the ranking process. Individual and class charts are added to throughout the unit.
- **Cooperative Grouping:** Students work in collaborative teams to rank social offenses with the *Visual Ranking Tool*. Students also work in small groups as they research on the Internet, create an action plan, give an oral presentation, and create their supplementary products.
- **Peer and Teacher Feedback:** Students receive peer and teacher feedback while ranking their lists of social offenses with the interactive *Visual Ranking Tool*. During project work, students meet with the teacher for spot-checks to review their individual action plans and receive feedback. In addition, students are asked to elicit feedback from their audiences after giving their oral presentations. The teacher gives feedback on the final product with the rubric.
- **Recognition:** Students receive recognition when they give their oral presentations to the class and their chosen audience. If they create a Web site, they receive recognition from a wider audience.
- **Questioning:** The teacher begins the unit with questioning in order to tap prior knowledge. The discussion of the Essential, Unit, and Content Questions provide questioning throughout the unit. Small group discussions about literary language, themes and issues, and reflection activities provide questioning, further probing students to think at higher levels.
- **Modeling:** The teacher models by reading important or difficult scenes of the play in class so discussions can take place. Students have a template to model an effective action plan and models of exemplary projects are shared and discussed before project work begins.
- **Classroom Management:** Students work in teams while working with the online thinking tool. Students also work in small groups to complete research and create their oral presentations and final products.