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Composition 102:
Shakespeare on Power Responsibility and Death

Description
This course uses Shakespeare's tragedies to introduce methods of research and writing of investigative papers. Students will read three tragedies, and one or more of these plays will be the basis for their final research papers. Although the students in research-paper courses typically write about current issues, such as abortion, capital punishment, or euthanasia, here students will immerse themselves in researching Shakespeare's tragedies. While the main goal is for students to learn research methodology, this unique course allows those students who are interested in literature to learn these skills while developing a deeper appreciation of Shakespeare's works.

Texts

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Ed. Harold Jenkins. London: Arden, 1982.
Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. Ed. Robert S. Miola. New York: Norton, 2004.
Shakespeare, William. *Othello*. Ed. E. A. J. Honigmann. London: Arden, 1997.
Shakespeare, William. "Sonnets." In *The Norton Shakespeare,* ed. Stephen Greenblatt. New York: Norton, 1997.
Winkler, Anthony C., and Jo Ray McCuen. *Writing the Research Paper: A Handbook*. 6th ed. Boston: Thomson/Heinle, 2003.
The American Heritage Dictionary, or any quality equivalent.

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Goals and Objectives

1. To write three short papers; and then to write a longer research paper of 8–10 pages, plus a separate formal outline and an MLA-style "works cited" page of eight entries or more. The research paper should display mastery of the principles of logic, organization, persuasion, and documentation.

2. Students will undertake research, which involves the use of research tools and library resources such as card catalogs, computerized databases, indexes, periodicals, reference works, microfilm, nonprint media, the Internet, etc.

3. Students will read critically and interpret and evaluate the sources.

4. Students will compose accurate, annotated reference (source) notes for sampling sources and for creating a list of works cited.

5. Students will correctly incorporate source material through paraphrase, summary, and quotation (and avoid plagiarism) on notes or in the text.

6. Students will create a formal outline of the research paper.

7. Students will compile accurately MLA-formatted "works cited" entries.

8. Students will incorporate source material smoothly into the text in the MLA parenthetical citation format.

9. Students will identify plagiarism and avoid its use.

Importance and Themes

Power, Responsibility, and Death

In this course, we investigate the nature of power and its consequent personal and social responsibilities. Macbeth, Othello, and Hamlet all must contend with their ambitions, with the power they seek or have attained. They must consider the competing forces of their own individual desires against those responsibilities required of their respective rank and station, as well as those moral imperatives that humanity insists they follow. As these are tragedies, each play ends in the death of the hero, as well as many of the other characters. The class investigates how corrupting power leads to suicide, murder, and other means of death, as well as the meaning and nature of death in light of the life each character has led.

Shakespeare is an important or even an essential element of any liberal arts education. His work is a centerpiece from which much of world literature has followed. Intellectually, he engages us with a variety that no other writer in history possesses. His works demonstrate universal and perennial characteristics of human nature, those that are familiar to all people of all time periods. Every generation finds in Shakespeare what it seeks within itself, answering for us even those questions we might not have been yet able to articulate. We recognize ourselves and those with whom we interact in the greatest of Shakespeare's characters: Hamlet, Rosalind, Lear, Hal, and so many others. As an artist, he is among the

finest dramatists. The forceful stories Shakespeare has borrowed or invented are distinguished by their plotting, pacing, and symmetry. Above all, his poetry gives us rich, diverse, articulate, and memorably enduring expressions of the human heart and mind.

Techniques and Pitfalls

Although some students who come to college enjoy reading Shakespeare or are excited about reading his works for the first time, there are others who approach the plays with reservations, either because of the unfamiliar language, the anxiety of reading such a "great," i.e., impenetrable, author, or because they have had disagreeable experiences with studying Shakespeare in the past, usually in high school, where the environment may not have been ideal.

It is difficult to say how many of the students begin the semester looking forward to reading the material. Often, most are not. However, by easing them into the language (through the sonnets), and by encouraging them to use supplemental materials from books and the Internet, I hope to enable them to confront their anxieties. It is my goal that soon enough many of them will feel the language grow easier to understand, and that they then more readily enjoy the rewards that Shakespeare's language can bring us. Perhaps they feel the excitement of their vocabularies increasing, or a better sense of previously misunderstood cultural and historical references, or even just the beauty of the language itself and its power to move us.

To reach this point, it is important to both decrease the perceived difficulty of the works and to impress upon the student that Shakespeare wrote for everyone, including people "like me and you." Obviously, the language is the first and greatest hurdle, so I have found beginning with the sonnets to be effective because, although they are challenging, they are short and self-contained, as well as beautifully written. The unit on Shakespeare's sonnets usually begins with sonnet no. 3, a relatively straightforward appeal to a young man to procreate. Because the subject matter is not complicated, once the language is understood, the student can see that with a bit of effort, the meaning is unlocked and he or she is free to enjoy the beauty of how the ideas are expressed. Next, we study sonnet 18, one of the most famous sonnets. Most students know the first line: "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" Once the understanding of this conceit is established, the rest is easy. Sonnet 29 is similarly direct, and, like 3 and 18, it illustrates the "turn" of the sonnet: "Yet in these thoughts my self almost despising." This leads to a discussion of the structure of the sonnet and the "rules" for its composition, including rhyme scheme, meter, line numbers, and other aspects of the form. Discussion of sonnet 116, another famous poem, continues to ease the student into Shakespeare's language, and finally, 130, with its amusing deflation of those comparisons that flatter the "perfect woman," prepares the student to tackle the more difficult prospect of analyzing a sonnet without the help of the instructor. Also, by this time, with the help of a good annotated edition, students should be ready for the challenge of reading through the relatively short *Macbeth,* as well as moving on to the enjoyment of other Shakespeare plays.

Overview of the Course

This course is structured in two parts: in the first half of the course, students become familiar with the source materials (i.e., the plays), and are asked to write short papers, or "literary analyses," on the sonnets, *Macbeth,* and either *Othello* or *Hamlet*; in the second half of

the course, students write the research paper, which can be on any of the aforementioned works by Shakespeare. In both the first and second halves, students must demonstrate mastery of particular research skills.

Structure of the Course

Part One (to Midterm)

After a brief introduction to Shakespeare, the students spend the first half of the course reading the sonnets and the three Shakespeare plays, while at the same time reading their research paper textbook by Winkler and McCuen.

Unit One: Shakespeare's sonnets.
During the first and second weeks of the semester, so that students can become accustomed to Shakespeare's language, we study a selection of Shakespeare's sonnets. Sonnets 3, 18, 29, 116, and 130 are read aloud in class and discussed. Students then form groups of three or four and together choose another sonnet which they will be responsible for analyzing. Groups prepare a thorough summary or modern rendering (line-by-line) of the sonnet to be turned in. After students are given sufficient time to understand the sonnet, they read the sonnet aloud to the class and explain its meaning. Students then write their first literary analysis based on Shakespeare's sonnets.

Unit Two: *Macbeth*
For the first play, discussion/lecture is employed. The class forms a circle to encourage interaction, and we work our way through the play scene by scene. A variety of concepts are taught along the way, including "equivocation," "subjective and objective ghosts," and many others. Students are asked to volunteer to prepare a discussion of Macbeth's soliloquies when we come to them in our discussion. At the end of our discussion, students write their second literary analysis, this one on *Macbeth*.

Unit Three: *Othello*
The structure of our discussion of *Othello* is similar to that of *Macbeth*, but the students are relied on more to produce explanation of specific scenes, character motivations, plot concerns, social issues, etc. Parts of two class periods are spent reading aloud and discussing the temptation scenes of 3.3 and 4.1. Students are asked to analyze Iago's methods and motives as illustrated by these scenes and others. Student have a choice as to whether to write their third and last literary analysis on *Othello* or *Hamlet*.

Unit Four: *Hamlet*
The discussion of this play is to some degree organized by the students themselves. Among other things, the seven soliloquies (six of Hamlet's and one of Claudius's) are analyzed by the students, who report to the class. Also, other key scenes are similarly analyzed. Less class time is spent on this play than on *Othello*, as less time was spent on O*thello* than was spent on *Macbeth*: as the semester continues, students become more adept at Shakespeare's language and literary constructs, relying less and less on my guidance.

Part Two (the Research Paper)

Often we have not completed *Hamlet* by the midterm, so there is some overlap with the second part of the course. At the point where we have reached the midterm, we begin to write the main research paper.

Unit Five: The research paper
The basic steps of the research paper are as follows:
    Subject
    Preliminary bibliography cards
    Thesis, justification and abstract
    First outline
    Bibliography cards
    First draft (with works cited page)
    Second outline
    Final draft (with final outline and "works cited" page)

Unit Six: End-of-semester project
When students are waiting for me to return their first drafts of the research paper, we commonly have an end-of-semester project of some kind. Some of the projects are *stage readings*, a short paper on a film adaptation of one of the plays, an annotated bibliography, an in-class writing assignment, and several others.

Grading Policy

The evaluation of the course is as follows:

Research paper	30% of total grade
In-class writing analyses, and final draft essays of out-of-class writing (includes analyses and short research projects), various quizzes and exercises	30% of total grade
Stage reading/End-of-semester project	20% of total grade
General class participation, including prompt attendance	20% of total grade

Syllabus

Week One:	Introduction to the course
	Writing sample
	Chapter 1 (Winkler)
	Overview of research paper
	Introduction to the library
	Introduction to Shakespeare (+ Arden texts)
Week Two:	Introduction to the library (continued)
	Shakespeare's sonnets
	Chapters 3 and 5 (Winkler)
Week Three:	Shakespeare's sonnets (continued)

Introduction to literary analysis: sonnets
First literary analysis
Shakespeare's *Macbeth*
Chapters 2 and 4 (Winkler)

Week Four: Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (continued)
The Critical Introduction to *Macbeth* in Penguin edition
          Either one of A.C. Bradley's two essays on *Macbeth*
and notes Z–FF; this can be found in most libraries
(*Shakespearean Tragedy*) or at clicknotes.com:
http://www.clicknotes.com/bradley/welcome.html
Chapter 6 and Appendix B (Winkler)
Second literary analysis

Week Five: Shakespeare's *Othello*
Chapters 7 and 8 and Appendix A (Winkler)

Week Six: Shakespeare's *Othello* (continued)
The Critical Introduction to *Othello*: pp. 12–61 in Arden
edition
Either one of A.C. Bradley's two essays on *Othello* and notes
I–R; this can be found in most libraries (*Shakespearean Tragedy*)
or at clicknotes.com:
http://www.clicknotes.com/bradley/welcome.html
Third literary analysis

Week Seven: Shakespeare's *Hamlet*
Preliminary bibliography cards
Thesis, justification, and abstract

Week Eight: Midterm
Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (continued)
The Critical Introduction to *Hamlet*: pp. 122–159 in Arden
edition
Either one of A.C. Bradley's two essays on *Hamlet* and notes
A–H; this can be found in most libraries (*Shakespearean
Tragedy*) or at clicknotes.com:
http://www.clicknotes.com/bradley/welcome.html
First outline of research paper

Week Nine: Bibliography cards

Week Ten: First draft of research paper

Week Eleven: End-of-semester project

Week Twelve: Second outline of research paper
End-of-semester project

Week Thirteen:	**Final draft of research paper due**
	End-of-semester project
Week Fourteen:	End-of-semester project
Week Fifteen:	End-of-semester project
Week Sixteen:	End-of-semester project

First Literary Analysis: The Sonnets

For your first literary analysis, you are asked to write an essay of approximately 750 words (3 pp.) on one or more of Shakespeare's sonnets. For this paper, you are required to research your topic by finding at least two secondary sources which discuss your topic. (For this assignment, you must use books or journals only. No Internet sources, please.) You must integrate quotes and/or paraphrases from your sources into your paper and properly cite. (At least two citations are required, but you may use more.) Be sure to see me if you don't understand how to do this (see below). Also, be careful to avoid accidental plagiarism. Again, see me if you're not sure how to avoid this. At the end of the paper (on a separate sheet), you will provide a "works cited" page that lists, in alphabetical order, both your secondary sources (your research) and your primary source (the sonnets). Make sure you know how to properly list these entries.

Please remember to have a clear thesis, a topic sentence for each supporting paragraph, and details relevant to that particular paragraph only. Do not be repetitive. Make sure your essays are *organized*. Obviously, the best way to accomplish this is to create an outline, but you are not required to turn an outline in. Also, no misspelled words, run-on sentences, fragments, or other errors that should be fixed with a careful proofreading will be tolerated.

If you need to write a longer essay, you may, but don't overdo it. You won't be graded on length, but on the quality and organization of ideas.

Suggested Sonnet Topics

Choose one (or more) of Shakespeare's sonnets (one can be the sonnet you analyzed with your group) and choose one of the following:

1. Discuss the overall theme of the sonnet. This is not simply a summary of the sonnet, but a larger theme that is demonstrated by the sonnet.

2. Choose one specific part of the sonnet (one line, one quatrain, the first half, the second half, etc.) and discuss any thematic questions or questions of meaning that occur to you.

3. Some of the sonnets are often discussed because there is some critical argument or problem with interpretation. Choose one (or more) of these and discuss.

4. The overall interpretations about the young man of the first 126 sonnets and the "dark lady" of sonnets 127–152 have also caused a lot of debate. Choose one of the sonnets and discuss the larger debate about the sonnet group in terms of that specific sonnet.

There are many books in most college libraries on Shakespeare's sonnets. If you search in the tables of content and indexes of these books, you will find information that you may find useful. Use these, if you wish, as your secondary sources. If you're not sure what to write about, look at these books to investigate some of the critical discussions regarding the sonnets.

Second Literary Analysis: *Macbeth*

For your second literary analysis, you are asked to write an essay of approximately 750 words (3 pp.) on *Macbeth*. For this paper, you are required to research your topic by finding at least two secondary sources, either from books or from the computer, which discuss your topic. You must integrate quotes and/or paraphrases from your sources into your paper and properly cite. (At least two citations are required, but you may use more.) Be sure to see me if you don't understand how to do this (see below). Also, be careful to avoid accidental plagiarism. Again, see me if you're not sure how to avoid this. At the end of the paper (on a separate sheet), you will provide a bibliography (also called "works cited page") that lists, in alphabetical order, both your secondary sources (your research) and your primary source (*Macbeth*). Make sure you know how to properly list these entries.

Please remember to have a clear thesis, a topic sentence for each supporting paragraph, and details relevant to that particular paragraph only. Do not be repetitive. Make sure your essays are organized. Obviously, the best way to accomplish this is to create an outline, but you are not required to turn an outline in. Also, no misspelled words, run-on sentences, fragments, or other errors that should be fixed with a careful proofreading will be tolerated.

If you need to write a longer essay, you may, but don't overdo it. You won't be graded on length, but on the quality and organization of ideas.

Suggested *Macbeth* Topics

1. Discuss the purpose and function of ambition in the play. Using a concordance, notice how the word *ambition* is used in the play. How is it defined? What is the difference between *good* and *bad* ambition? Does Macbeth understand the difference between the two, and what, ultimately, causes him to choose the *bad* over the *good*?

2. "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" begins an important theme in "Macbeth": things are not as they appear. Trace the occurrences of trickery and deception (both of self and others) in the play, analyzing their thematic importance. How are these ideas related to the concept of *equivocation*?

3. The concepts of *fate* and *free will* are important in understanding Macbeth's character and motivations. Is Macbeth a victim of *fate*? Is he a victim of the witches (or, more generally, the spirit and power of evil forces)? Or does he have the power to shape his own destiny? Depending on your answer, how does this explain how Macbeth is transformed during the play? How could have things have been different?

4. The word *fear* occurs 48 times in *Macbeth* in noun and verb forms and as a root in words such as *afeard* and *fearful*. Which characters exhibit the most fear? What causes their fear? How does fear differ from guilt?

5. Lady Macbeth's character is also ambitious, but she is a very different person than her husband. Trace her character in terms of *ambition* and *guilt*. How does she respond to the various events of the play? How does her character change throughout the play, and what are the causes of these changes? Avoid plot summary; analyze character.

6. Is Macbeth a tragic hero? Define the meaning of *tragic hero* and show how Macbeth is or is not tragic. He is an evil character, which might suggest that he is not worthy of our sympathy, but he does not begin the play as an evil character. What are his role and reputation before the beginning of the play? What has he accomplished, and how is he rewarded? What is King Duncan's opinion of him? Is it justified? How fundamentally does Macbeth change in the course of the play? Pinpoint key moments in his evolution from war hero to tyrant.

7. One of the aspects of a tragic hero is that there must be a moral weakness or flaw in his character that leads him to his tragic destiny. What weaknesses and flaws does Macbeth demonstrate, and how do they lead to his downfall?

8. The witches can be seen as variations of the Greek *Fates*. Notice that in the text they are not referred to as *witches* but as the *weird sisters*. What is the origin of the word *weird* in Old English, and how does this inform the action of the play?

9. Compare and contrast the characters of Macbeth and Banquo. How are they fundamentally different and how are they the same? Trace their actions and their responses to one another and other events in the play.

10. *Nature* is an important element in the play, almost a character in itself. If we learn that "fair is foul, and foul is fair" in the beginning of the play, how does this affect the natural order of life in light of the events of the play? What are the examples where nature responds to the actions of the characters (such as weather, vegetation, animals and birds, sterility and fertility, disease and health), and how do these responses comment upon the important themes of the play?

11. Describe the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. How do they feel about each other? What is their marriage like? Do they feel real affection for each other? How does their relationship affect the way that we perceive these characters?

12. To what extent is Lady Macbeth responsible for Duncan's murder? Are she and Macbeth equal partners in crime? Does their relationship (and their collaboration) shift over time? At what point does Macbeth start to act alone, without her help or knowledge? Read carefully Lady Macbeth's words in the sleepwalking scene. What do you think caused her breakdown? What prior events does she allude to, and what

does she have to say about them? How does Macbeth react to the news of his wife's death? How does her death change him as a character?

13. At the end of the play, Macduff kills Macbeth in a scene easily read as the victory of Good over Evil. But would that be an accurate characterization? Is Macbeth *wholly* evil? (Consider, for example, his initial heroism in the war against Norway; his love for his wife; any other factors that may serve to make him seem more "human" or believable.) By the same token, is Macduff *wholly* good? (Is he really blameless? What mistakes has he made? Of what is he guilty?) Are we dealing here with entirely "black" and "white" characters, like the "good guys" and the "bad guys" in an old western, or is there some "gray" area? And if so, is that a strength or a weakness of the play? What is the effect of this moral ambiguity?

14. In some respects, *Macbeth* is a meditation upon "manhood." It explores "natural" and "unnatural" gender behavior, offering varying views on what constitutes real "manhood." Note statements throughout the play that deal with "manliness," masculine identity, being a man, etc. How do the various characters in the play define "manhood"? How do these definitions shift over the course of the play?

15. Macbeth's speech upon hearing that his wife is dead (5.5.17–28) is one of the most famous and often-quoted passages in all of English literature. Analyze these lines carefully, and paraphrase them in your own words. What is Macbeth's reaction to the news? How does Lady Macbeth's death influence his actions throughout the rest of the play?

(Some of the preceding questions are by or were modified from questions written by Dr. Debora B. Schwartz, at http://cla.calpoly.edu/~dschwart/engl339/macbeth.html.)

Third Literary Analysis: *Othello* or *Hamlet*

For your third literary analysis, you are asked to write an essay of approximately 750 words (3 pp.) on either *Othello* or *Hamlet*. For this paper, you are required to research your topic by finding at least two secondary sources which discuss your topic. (For this assignment, you must use books or journals only. No Internet sources, please.) You must integrate quotes and/or paraphrases from your sources into your paper and properly cite. (At least two citations are required, but you may use more.) Be sure to see me if you don't understand how to do this (see below). Also, be careful to avoid accidental plagiarism. Again, see me if you're not sure how to avoid this. At the end of the paper (on a separate sheet), you will provide a "works cited" page that lists, in alphabetical order, both your secondary sources (your research) and your primary source (*Othello* or *Hamlet*). Make sure you know how to properly list these entries.

Please remember to have a clear thesis, a topic sentence for each supporting paragraph, and details relevant to that particular paragraph only. Do not be repetitive. Make sure your essays are *organized*. Obviously, the best way to accomplish this is to create an outline, but you are not required to turn an outline in. Also, no misspelled words, run-on sentences, fragments, or other errors that should be fixed with a careful proofreading will be tolerated.

If you need to write a longer essay, you may, but don't overdo it. You won't be graded on length, but on the quality and organization of ideas.

Suggested *Othello* Topics

1. What is Iago's motivation? It is a question that surely has concerned readers since the play was first performed. What are his motives? Are his explanations sufficient? To what degree has Iago planned the entire scheme? To what degree is he just making it up as he goes along?

2. Do Othello and Desdemona ever consummate their marriage? Find proof in the text. Is this an important question? Why or why not?

3. What do Desdemona and Emilia's conversations about men and women teach us about the characters of Desdemona and of Emilia? How is their conversation related to the rest of the play?

4. Consider Othello's speech in his death scene. How do you think his statement sums up the character of Othello and the play as a whole?

5. Discuss Iago's relationship with Roderigo.

6. What is Othello's "tragic flaw?" Could he have more than one? How does Iago manipulate those flaws? Analyze—don't merely discuss plot.

7. What kind of relationship do Othello and Desdemona have? What is their relationship based on?

8. Consider 3.3. It is the turning point in the play. What is Iago's method, and why does it work so well? What is Othello's state of mind, and how does it change during the scene?

9. How does the handkerchief function in the play? What is its importance—whom is it important to and why?

10. How easily could Iago's plot have fallen apart? What would have had to have happen, and what consequences would there be?

11. What is the function of Bianca in this play?

12. Discuss Desdemona. Is she a different person at different points in the play and around different people? If so, what function does she serve in these various times and situations?

13. What is the importance of race in Shakespeare's portrayal of Othello? Consider how others in the play perceive Othello. What does his race mean to them? What does he mean to them as an individual? How does Othello perceive himself?

14. Discuss Emilia. How does her character change during the course of the play? When is Emilia silent, and when does she speak, and why? Consider, for example, her behavior regarding the handkerchief vs. her behavior in 5.2.

15. Consider Iago's soliloquies. When does Iago gain our sympathy and when does he repel it? How does Iago develop his arguments to himself? To what extent are these arguments convincing? What is the effect of these discussions with himself?

16. How does the theme of witchcraft and magic function in the play? How is it related to Othello's foreignness?

17. Discuss innocence in the play concerning the major characters. Who is innocent? Who is not? Is anyone purely innocent? In what ways are they not?

18. What do you think of Shakespeare's portrayal of marriage and women in this play?

19. Iago, Cassio, and Othello are soldiers with a sense of duty and honor, and a concern for reputation. How do you think these concepts affect the action of the play? How might appearance vs. reality figure into this discussion? How might the play have been different if these characters saw duty, honor, and reputation differently?

20. Othello is a Moor. How does this contribute to the action of the play differently than, say, if he were from another European country instead?

21. Which characters elicit our sympathy and why? Which characters do not and why not?

22. Discuss the problem of time in the play.

23. Othello is "the Moor" but is also "of Venice." How does his sense of his similarity to and difference from other people change over the course of the play?

24. Desdemona, Emilia, and Bianca come from very different social and economic backgrounds, and are very different women. But each of them lives in and must respond to a patriarchal political order. What similarities and differences do you see among the responses and behaviors of these women?

25. Jealousy is an important concept in the play, especially regarding Othello. However, how does jealousy affect Iago? Roderigo? Brabantio? Bianca? Cassio? Emilia?

26. Discuss "proof" in the play.

27. Compare and contrast Iago's diatribe about women and Emilia's long speech claiming that if there's anything wrong with women, it's the fault of their husbands.

28. How is the play a metaphor for good and/or evil? Who is the winner in the end? Why?

Suggested *Hamlet* Topics

1. Select one of Hamlet soliloquies, and by detailed attention to the poetry discuss the nature of Hamlet's feelings as they reveal themselves in this speech. What insights might this speech provide into the prince's elusive character?

2. Discuss Hamlet's treatment of and ideas about women. How might these help to clarify some of the interpretative issues of the play? You might want to consider carefully the way he talks about sexuality.

3. Discuss the importance in *Hamlet* of one of the following: (a) Ophelia, (b) Rozencrantz and Guildenstern, (c) the ghost of Hamlet senior, (d) Polonius, (e) Fortinbras, (f) Gertrude. Do not just write about what these people do. Discuss how attention to them illuminates issues of central importance to the play as a whole (i.e., deal with matters of importance to the thematic or character development in the play, not with matters of the plot).

4. Discuss the importance of appearance and reality in *Hamlet* (consider the Ghost, the players, and various imagery from the play).

5. Consider some of the important imagery in the play, such as poison, infection, revenge, secrecy, madness, and show how one or more functions in the play.

6. Consider the Ghost. Should Hamlet believe him? Is he really Hamlet's father? How does your belief in him affect your reading of the play? What are objective and subjective ghosts? How important is the Ghost in the triangular relationship of Hamlet, Gertrude, and Claudius? You may want to expand to discuss the idea of ghosts in Shakespeare's plays or in Elizabethan plays in general.

7. Why doesn't Hamlet act? Trace the events of the play, the information Hamlet receives, and his feelings throughout the play as demonstrated in his soliloquies and other statements he makes, thereby determining the extent and causes of Hamlet's delay.

8. Compare the three men of action—Hamlet, Laertes, Fortinbras—of this play. Who's right? Is action or contemplation or a combination of them the most successful course of action?

9. Consider Hamlet's "friends"—Horatio, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

10. Consider the Claudius–Gertrude relationship. Did Gertrude know of Claudius's murder of her first husband? What (if anything) is Gertrude guilty of in the play?

11. There is quite a bit of play-acting within the play. Many characters are forced to put on an act. Who's being himself or herself, and who is merely acting?

12. Discuss the relationship of Ophelia and Hamlet. Do they love each other?

13. Examine the scene that finds Claudius at prayer (3.3.38–101). This scene is a microcosm of all of the play's uncertainties and misleading appearances that make moral action so perilous and "tragic."

14. What morality, if any, does Hamlet demonstrate? What beliefs seem to drive Hamlet forward? Is Hamlet constant in his opinions and actions, or is he, like Polonius, a hypocrite?

15. Hamlet and Laertes: consider the two men and their contrasting responses to "set it right." Who is right? moral? effective? What do they, together, suggest about "the problem of moral action in an uncertain world"?

16. Conflict is essential to drama. Show that *Hamlet* presents both an outward and an inward conflict.

17. Discuss *Hamlet* as a revenge tragedy, tracing the popular Elizabethan tradition.

18. How important is the general setting of Denmark to the overall play? How does Shakespeare create this setting?

19. Compare and contrast the characters of Hamlet and Horatio.

20. Although Hamlet ultimately rejects it at the end of the play, suicide is an ever-present solution to the problems in the drama. Discuss the play's suggestion of suicide and its imagery of death.

21. Analyze the characterization of Ophelia and assess her function in *Hamlet.*

22. In *Hamlet,* characters perform a play. Write an essay in which you explore the function and significance of this play-within-a-play. What is the function and effect of this device? What issues does Shakespeare raise through it? What, for example, might the play-within-a-play suggest about the value of drama—or of a play like *Hamlet?* What different attitudes toward drama are displayed by various characters in *Hamlet?* What attitudes do the plays encourage us to adopt?

23. In Act 1, Scene 2, Hamlet is introduced as an "honest man," defending the sincerity of his grief over his father's death and his mother's hasty remarriage. Explore how this sincerity slowly (or rapidly) erodes throughout the course of the play, and how Hamlet's "honesty" is ultimately a façade for deception.

24. What Hamlet has to do may be necessary, or even just, as his world sees it, but it is a defilement of his own ideals, and difficult for him to justify. How is *Hamlet* a tragedy?

25. Is Hamlet a sympathetic character?

26. Describe Hamlet's relationship with his mother. Do you consider this a typical mother–son relationship?

27. In the graveyard scene (5.1), the gravediggers make many ironic comments. In what way do these comments shed light on events taking place in the play?

28. Consider the general dangers (political, social) in the world of Hamlet.

29. Trace the development of Prince Hamlet in power, insight, and responsibility from the beginning to the end of the play.

30. Discuss the theme of revenge in the play.

31. Evaluate the justification for Hamlet's treatment of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

32. Decide the extent to which Claudius is a usurper or a legitimate ruler.

33. Find the specific evidence that indicates the guilt or innocence of Gertrude regarding her dead husband.

34. Identify the various sources of comic relief or reassurance in his tragedy.

35. *Hamlet* has been called a "claustrophobic" play because of the ways the different characters spy on one another. Discuss "spying" in the play.

36. Is Hamlet mad? Hamlet tells his mother that he "essentially [is] not in madness, / But mad in craft" (3.4.204–205) and claims to "put an antic disposition on" (1.5.189), but does he ever cross the line between sanity and insanity in the play? Could Hamlet really be sane in an insane world?

37. From the beginning of the play, Hamlet is depressed, and he considers suicide several different times. What is the real cause of his melancholy? Does he ever break out of his melancholy?

38. As Hamlet says, "What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god!" (2.2.286–289). At the same time, though, we are sometimes ruled by our passions (lust, greed, gluttony, etc.). We are capable of greatness and nobility, but we are also capable of behavior fitting a beast, so Hamlet asks another "pregnant" question (a question loaded with meaning) when he asks Ophelia, "What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven?" (3.1.128–129). How does the theme of passion and reason apply to some of the main characters?

39. Many things are rotten in the state of Denmark, and images of decay, corruption, and disease are common throughout the play. Following the conventions of tragedy, many of the characters become corrupted in some way, and, by the end of the play, all of the corrupt characters must be eliminated so that Denmark can once again be set right. Many characters in *Hamlet* die. In what ways is each of these characters "corrupt"? What images in the play suggest decay, corruption, or disease?

40. What aspects of Hamlet's character are admirable? What are Hamlet's weaknesses or flaws? And what about Hamlet's mental state? Hamlet has been called the most intelligent character in all of literature. Why? And how do his melancholy and feigned (or unfeigned) madness add complexity to his character? Does Hamlet see the world lucidly, or is his perception of the world too clouded by his melancholy?

41. In her madness, Ophelia brings up an important theme of the play: "Lord," she says, "we know what we are, but know not what we may be" (4.5.43–44). Both "what we are" and "what we may be" are problems that Hamlet struggles with throughout the play. Should one lead an active life or a passive life? Does God help to direct our actions? Is the world nothing more than a prison? Is there a meaning to life? Are some of Hamlet's views on life too pessimistic, or are his views supported by the world of the play? Is Hamlet an idealist and therefore disappointed by the realities of life?

Note: Some of the preceding questions on *Hamlet* were taken from or modified from the following sources:

  http://www.shakespeare-online.com/topics/hamlettopics.html

  http://www.eng.fju.edu.tw/English_Literature/Shakespeare/Hamlet/#Study%20Questions

  http://www.ivcc.edu/eng1002/handout_hamlet_topics.htm

Research Paper

Themes

The themes of power, responsibility, and death are universal. Macbeth, Othello, and Hamlet all must contend with their ambitions, and with the power they seek or have attained. They must consider the competing forces of their own individual desires against the responsibilities required of their respective rank and station, as well as those moral imperatives that humanity insists they follow. Finally, each of these characters confronts death and wonders at the meaning and nature of death in light of the life each has led.

Thesis, Justification, Abstract

Once you've chosen your subject for the research paper, you must formulate a strong *thesis*. The scope of your paper is in many ways indicated by your thesis. It should suggest a topic and argument that will take 8–10 pages to fully develop and support. Be careful that your thesis does not prepare you for a paper that is too short or too long.

   What is a thesis? One anthology says it is the "central idea of an essay" (Meyer 1402). It is also "an assertion or a claim that indicates what you claim to be true, interesting, or valuable about your subject" (Hodges 412). Consider this checklist, also found in Hodges (415):

- Is your thesis clear?

- Could it be more specific (or general)?
- Is it likely to interest your audience?
- Does it accurately reflect what you think?
- Can you support it?
- Will you be able to support it within the length specified for this research paper?
- Will the reader be able to recognize it easily?

Next, you will write a *justification,* a paragraph of approximately 100 words justifying why your topic is worthy of your time and mine. Why is it worth writing about? Why is worth reading about?

Finally, you will write an ab*stract*. It is to be typed, double-spaced, and not to exceed one side of one page. In it you will flesh out your ideas, telling me specifically what you will write about and what details you will use to support your main ideas.

The assignment will be turned in like this: on page one, write your heading and then write "Thesis," followed by that information. Then skip a line and write "Justification," followed by that information. Then, no matter where you are on the page, go to the top of a second page and begin your abstract, *filling the whole page.*

Outline

Once your thesis for the research paper has been approved, you can begin to work on the paper itself. It is often helpful to draw up an outline as a means of structuring the paper. Consider the following outline model:

I. Introduction: Announces subject; gets audience's interest and attention; establishes a trustworthy character for the writer

II. Narration: Gives background, context, statement of problem, or definition

III. Partition: States thesis or claim, outlines or maps out arguments

IV. Argument: Makes arguments and gives evidence for the claim or thesis

V. Refutation: Shows why opposing arguments are not true or valid

VI. Conclusion: Summarizes arguments and ties into the introduction, background, thesis

Your outline will be somewhat simpler if you use the following outline form:

I. Introduction/Thesis: Attention getter, background, thesis or claim, map

II. Your arguments follow

III. Refute opposing arguments

IV. Conclusion

As you can see, there are several ways to approach the organization of your paper. You may choose or modify either of these models, or you may create your own model to suit your particular topic. The important thing is that your outline is well thought-out, thorough, concrete, clear, and specific. The better you are at establishing these criteria, the better your outline, and the better your paper.

Tips for Writing Papers

Here is a list of problems/concerns that students should be aware of when writing essays:

- *Organization*—a student must be conscious of how the paper is organized.
- Make sure to have a clear and identifiable *thesis* and *topic sentences*.
- The *thesis* is made up of your *topic and your point*. What are you arguing exactly?
- Make sure to have clear and relevant *supporting details* for each main idea.
- All ideas must be *connected* and *flow* smoothly from one to the next.
- Avoid *wordiness*—express ideas *clearly, concisely,* and *concretely*.
- Choose only words that are *concrete* and *specific*.
- Avoid the *weak verbs*: "to be," "to have," "to do," "to make."
- Do not be *repetitious*—express ideas well—once.
- Avoid *fragments and run-ons*—see me if you need help with these.
- Avoid simple mistakes like poor *spelling and punctuation*.
- Be sure to have a *strong conclusion* wherein the thesis is restated.
- Avoid *awkward* passages where the *meaning is unclear*.
- Be *consistent with tense*—use the present tense when discussing literature.
- Maintain a *formal and academic tone*—do not be casual and conversational with the reader.
- When possible, avoid "I," "me," and "you."
- Name the *author and title* of the work discussed somewhere in the first paragraph.
- Don't ever (ever) turn a paper in without carefully *proofreading* it.
- Always (always) write more than one *draft*—three or four is a good number.
- Properly cite *quotes and paraphrases*.
- Distinguish between *quotes* and *paraphrases*.
- Don't begin or end a paragraph with a *quote,* unless it has some specific purpose—maintain your authority within the context of the paper.

In-text citations can be written in one of the following ways:

"Although the young man is a source of great happiness to the speaker, the young man is also the cause of the speaker's insecurities" (Perez 115).

As Perez notes, "Although the young man is a source of great happiness to the speaker, the young man is also the cause of the speaker's insecurities" (115).

A paraphrase might look like this:

The young man brings joy to the speaker even as his existence and behavior makes the speaker unsure of himself (Perez 115).

Research Paper Checklist

Name_____

Subject/Thesis, Justification, and Abstract: _____

Preliminary Bibliography Cards: _____

First Outline: _____

Note Cards: _____

First Draft: _____

Second Outline: _____

Final Packet:

Cover Sheet: _____

Final Outline: _____

Text: _____

Works Cited Page: _____

Research Exercise

Find three (3) sources that discuss one of the following assigned passages. One source must be from a book, one must be from a journal, either in hard copy or online, and one must be from the Internet. First, copy the bibliographic information according to MLA form, and turn in a regular bibliography ("works cited" page). Then, on a separate sheet, turn in an annotated bibliography. An annotated bibliography is a list of citations of the works you've chosen, each followed by a short (100 words) description *and* evaluation of the source. If you consult the following checklist (and answer each of the questions in brief, direct style using paragraph form), you'll create a solid annotated bibliography:

- *Purpose:* What is the source trying to do?
- *Form:* Is it a book or an article or a…?
- *Author:* What are the author's credentials?

- *Arrangement:* How is the source organized?
- *Audience:* Who is the source aimed at?
- *Authority:* Is the author/publisher reliable?
- *Currency:* Is the source up-to-date?
- *Coverage:* Is the source comprehensive and fair?
- *Ease of use:* Are there any special features?

(The preceding list has been modified from http://www.aacc.cc.md.us/libinst/guides/annotatedbib.pdf.)

You should see the following sources for assistance in compiling your annotated bibliography.

See this one first:
    http://www.library.mun.ca/guides/howto/annotated_bibl.php.

Remember that your annotations will be a combination of descriptive *and* critical information.

See this one next:
    http://www.aacc.cc.md.us/libinst/guides/annotatedbib.pdf

Here is an example assignment, although the topic is not literature:
    http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_annotatedbibEX.html

Here is one final site you could look at for help:
    http://www.library.cornell.edu/okuref/research/skill28.htm

Also see http://www.ccc.commnet.edu/mla/index.shtml for assistance with MLA bibliographic form.

Assigned Passages

1. "To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
   Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
   To the last syllable of recorded time;
   And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
   The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
   Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
   That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
   And then is heard no more: it is a tale
   Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
   Signifying nothing."
           From *Macbeth* (5.5.19–28)

2. All the world's a stage,
    And all the men and women merely players;

They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms;
Then the whining school-boy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lin'd,
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side;
His youthful hose, well sav'd, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion;
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

From *As You Like It* (2.7.139)

3. But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks?
    It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.
    Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
    Who is already sick and pale with grief,
    That thou her maid art far more fair than she:
    Be not her maid, since she is envious;
    Her vestal livery is but sick and green
    And none but fools do wear it; cast it off.
    It is my lady, O, it is my love!
    O, that she knew she were!
    She speaks yet she says nothing: what of that?
    Her eye discourses; I will answer it.
    I am too bold, 'tis not to me she speaks:
    Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,
    Having some business, do entreat her eyes
    To twinkle in their spheres till they return.
    What if her eyes were there, they in her head?
    The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars,
    As daylight doth a lamp; her eyes in heaven
    Would through the airy region stream so bright

> That birds would sing and think it were not night.
> See, how she leans her cheek upon her hand!
> O, that I were a glove upon that hand,
> That I might touch that cheek!
> From *Romeo and Juliet* (2.2.1–25)

4.   IAGO. O, beware, my lord, of jealousy;
> It is the green-ey'd monster which doth mock
> The meat it feeds on: that cuckold lives in bliss
> Who, certain of his fate, loves not his wronger;
> But O, what damned minutes tells he o'er
> Who dotes, yet doubts, suspects, yet strongly loves!
>
> OTHELLO. O misery!
>
> IAGO. Poor and content is rich, and rich enough;
> But riches fineless is as poor as winter
> To him that ever fears he shall be poor;
> Good heaven, the souls of all my tribe defend
> From jealousy!
> From *Othello* (3.3.165–176)

Sources and Bibliography Cards

Sources

Next, you will find 15–20 sources for your research paper. *Warning:* most Internet literature sources are superficial and plot-based. They provide bad models for how you are to approach the analysis of literature. Therefore, I would highly recommend that you use Internet sources sparingly and only after you have thoroughly evaluated their quality. No more than two or three of your sources may be from the Internet, although you are encouraged to use sources from other computer sources, especially databases. No more than half of your sources may be a combination of Internet and databases; the rest of your sources must be from books, magazines, newspapers, and other similar sources. *You are encouraged to use mostly or all books in your research.*

From these 15–20 sources, you will ultimately choose the most relevant/useful 8 (or more) secondary sources for your paper.

Bibliography Cards

For each of your sources, you will need to create bibliography cards. The purpose of these note cards is to document specific information from your sources so you can easily access that information when you write your first draft. You are required to create a minimum of three (3) note cards for each of your sources. Exceptions can be made for short articles or for articles that are very specific, but overall, you need to have no fewer than 20 note cards. A good number to shoot for is 25 cards of relevant, useful information.

Important: Each card should have no more than one idea, one piece of information. If you find yourself talking about two or more topics on one card, then create separate cards for each idea. The cards must be 4 × 6, white, and lined on one side. No other cards will be accepted.

The cards should have the following information:

- The quote or paraphrase of the idea from your source. Begin writing this on the second line.
- The first major word of the bibliographic entry (usually the author's last name) and the pagination.
- The corresponding section, subsection, (if applicable) sub-subsection (and so on) of your outline. This should be written on the top line, left side of each card.
- Write your initials on the back of each card. Do not number your cards as a way of ordering them.

See p. 83 of the Winkler textbook for a model bibliography card. Use the information you learn from this text, but *do not follow the models in the book.* Instead, use the following example as a model for your cards:

2.1. 3.c.
"Hamlet's concept of himself is confused and
dangerous. Claudius's need to watch him closely is entirely
justified."
Reyes 116

Stage Reading Assignment

A stage reading is essentially a performance without memorization. It is not quite acting, but it is very close to it, and the idea is to get your body involved in making the drama come alive three-dimensionally. Props and costuming are not necessary but may be used as you see fit.

You should find a scene or scenes that are relatively self-contained and take at least twenty minutes to perform. The initial work in choosing your scene(s) and dividing up the lines is very important. Try to find a balance in giving everyone lines as best you can. The more you practice, as a group and alone (or with family/friends), the easier it will get. This is not simply four or five people standing in a line reading at us.

Which brings us to "blocking." This is the way the scene is physically set out. Where are the characters standing in relation to one another? When do they enter and exit? Who speaks to whom? Where are props placed? It is often helpful to draw pictures or diagrams.

The goal here is to begin to feel the way in which each dramatic text helps us play it. Embedded in this language are clues to its performance: it was written to be spoken and acted, and it will come alive if you let it. The more you read and practice such lines, the more you will see how they build character and situation.

Following each performance, the class will ask questions about choices made in putting on the scene(s) and so on. Grades will be given based on effort, quality, and a one-page (a full page) written account of the experience. The written account should be typed, double-spaced, and should discuss your preparation and the way in which performing the scene(s) changed the way you understand it. It is to be handed in the class following the performance.

Your Name:_____

Date:_____

Group Member Names:

_____

_____

_____

- Did each student seem generally well informed about the scene(s) they were performing? Did she/he understand the scene(s)?

  _____

  _____

- Were voices loud and clear enough? Did students mumble, mispronounce words, or demonstrate a lack of understanding of the material?

  _____

  _____

- Did the group seem interested in the reading? Were they enjoying themselves?

  _____

  _____

- How effective were the props students used (if any)?

  _____

  _____

- Did other students in class seem to understand and enjoy the scene(s)?

  _____

_____

- ▪ What two things did the group do well?

  _____

  _____

- ▪ What two things could the group have done better?

  _____

  _____

- ▪ General comments

  _____

  _____

Grade:_____

(Note: This stage reading assignment was contributed by Brad Greenberg, of Northeastern Illinois University.)

Resource Listings

The following list gives you an idea of the variety of resources that you might find useful:

- General encyclopedias
- Specialized encyclopedias
- *Masterplots* and Great Books reference books
- *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*
- The Internet
- Collections of critical articles by a variety of authors (such as the Modern Critical Views series)
- Books by one author about on specific work, a specific author, a period of literary history, a literary movement, and many other topics.

When evaluating your sources, make sure that you have chosen criticism that is responsibly written and relevant to your specific topic. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Who is the author?
- Is the host a reliable site?
- Is the information current and objective?

- Is it designed to promote or sell a product?
- Does the author present information to inform readers or is there another agenda at work?

Search Engines

Google
www.google.com

Language and Literature Search Engines
www.searchengines.com/reference_language_literature.html

The Argus Clearinghouse
www.clearinghouse.net

Library of Congress Research Center
http://www.loc.gov/rr/research-centers.html

Searchedu
www.searchedu.com

The Universal Library
www.ul.cs.cmu.edu

In searching the Internet for information, you may want to try the following sites:

Shakespeare: General

Mr. Shakespeare and the Internet
http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/
A. C. Bradley's Influential Analysis of Shakespeare's Tragedies
http://www.clicknotes.com/bradley/welcome.html
Shakes Sphere
http://sites.micro-link.net/zekscrab/index.html#top
Shakespeare's Sonnets
http://sites.micro-link.net/zekscrab/Sonnet.html#sonnet
Life in Elizabethan England
http://renaissance.dm.net/compendium/index.html
General Info on Shakespeare
http://www.britannica.com/shakespeare/index2.html
British Library's Quarto Editions of the Plays
http://www.bl.uk/treasures/shakespeare/homepage.html

Shakespeare's Complete Works

On Line
http://the-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/

Shakespeare's Language

A Shakespeare Glossary
> http://eserver.org/langs/shakespeare-glossary.txt

Absolute Shakespeare Glossary
> http://absoluteshakespeare.com/glossary/a.htm

Macbeth Information

Macbeth Study Guide
> http://absoluteshakespeare.com/guides/macbeth/macbeth.htm

Macbeth Info
> http://sites.micro-link.net/zekscrab/Macbeth.html#Macbeth

Macbeth Navigator
> http://www.clicknotes.com/macbeth/

Searchable *Macbeth*
> http://www.theplays.org/macbeth/index.html

Enjoying *Macbeth*
> http://www.pathguy.com/macbeth.htm

Othello Information

Othello Study Guide
> http://absoluteshakespeare.com/plays/othello/othello.htm

Othelllo Study Guide
> http://www.shakespearefest.org/Othello%20Study%20Guide.htm

Othello Info
> http://sites.micro-link.net/zekscrab/Othello.html#Othello

Othello Navigator
> http://www.clicknotes.com/othello/welcome.html#top

Searchable *Othello*
> http://www.theplays.org/othello/

PBS *Othello* Links
> http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/othello/links.html

Hamlet Information

Hamlet Online
> http://www.tk421.net/essays/hamlet/hamlet.html

Hamlet Study Guide
> http://absoluteshakespeare.com/guides/hamlet/hamlet.htm

Hamlet Info
> http://sites.micro-link.net/zekscrab/hamletPD.html#Hamlet

Hamlet Concordance
> http://www.global-language.com/enfolded.html

Hamlet Navigator
> http://www.clicknotes.com/Hamnavl/Hhome.html

Searchable *Hamlet*
> http://www.theplays.org/hamlet/index.html

A *Hamlet* Course
http://www.netcomuk.co.uk/~iandel/course.html

Shakespeare on the Web: An Annotated Guide

Introductory/General Sites

Surfing with the Bard
http://www.ulen.com/shakespeare/students/guide/

Surfing with the Bard is an introduction to Shakespeare for students. Included are sections on the poetry and unusual word arrangements, omissions and unusual words; a Shakespeare glossary, an interesting method of thoroughly understanding the plays through the use of a reading log (including a sample); another section that discusses and lists Shakespeare's plays on film and which gives students advice on how to watch these films; and a final section that provides links to links.

Shakespeare Classroom
http://www.jetlink.net/~massij/shakes/

The Shakespeare Classroom site has many, many helpful links for students. Although its original audience was intended to be advanced high-school and undergraduate college students, it recognizes that many other students as well as teachers have found the site useful. A sampling of information on the site: study questions for Shakespeare's plays, answers to frequently asked questions about Shakespeare, the filmed versions of Shakespeare's plays, photos, the Shakespeare Authorship Web Site, the Shakespeare Web, Shakespeare Showcase, Webspeare, Shakespearean Insult Service, Shakespeare's Monologues, and much more

All Shakespeare
http://www.allshakespeare.com/

This is a useful, all-purpose site devoted to helping students with Shakespeare. One caveat: it has essays available that students can "examine."

http://search.eb.com/shakespeare/study/

This is Encyclopaedia Britannica's web site for students studying Shakespeare. It has a few activities, but they are actually tidbits of information designed to further engage students in the world of Shakespeare. It is of limited usefulness, but what it has is interesting. Clicking on the "Return to Shakespeare and the Globe Web site" will bring you to Encyclopaedia Britannica's other information on Shakespeare.

Shakespeare Online
http://www.shakespeare-online.com/

Shakespeare Online is another good, all-purpose site for students studying Shakespeare. It has many, many links to things both fun and useful.

Shakespeare Resource Center
http://www.bardweb.net/

The Shakespeare Resource Center is yet another very useful site for Shakespeare students.

Miscellaneous Sites

Shakespeare High Cafeteria
http://www.shakespearehigh.com/cgi-bin/ikonboard/ikonboard.cgi

The Shakespeare High Cafeteria is a web board for students (and others), a place they can discuss Shakespeare's works (or just chitchat) with other students, ask questions, learn about recent Shakespeare news, share their creative writing, talk about performances they have seen, and so forth. There are many interesting conversations going on. For example see in the "Chit Chat" section: "Did any sort of insest (sic) occur in HAMLET?"

Shakespearean Homework Helper
http://members.aol.com/liadona2/shakespeare.html?f=fs

The Shakespearean Homework Helper is apparently still under construction, but it may turn out to be a good site. In the meantime, it has an "Ask a Question" option where students can e-mail the webmaster a question, and it will be answered, presumably for free.

Ask Shakespeare!
http://www.askshakespeare.com/

Ask Shakespeare! With Anne Occhiogrosso. I love this site. You can ask this woman any question about Shakespeare that you want! And for only $50.00 a year!

PBS: The Shakespeare Mystery
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shakespeare/index.html

PBS: The Shakespeare Mystery is a website devoted to the authorship question, an issue that invariably fascinates some of my students.

Track Star
http://trackstar.hprtec.org/

Track Star is a teacher/student search engine. In it, you can "find a track" or "make a track." For example, you can find a wide variety of information about learning Shakespeare by doing a keyword search for "Shakespeare." The "Themes and Standards Search" allows you to modify your search according to subject matter and grade level, although you cannot search specifically for "Shakespeare" at this level.

Literature Resources for the High School and College Student
http://home.teleport.com/~mgroves/LitResources/

Literature Resources for the High School and College Student is one of the best sources of information about literature on the web. It has nearly everything you could want. It is indispensable for any high school or college student.

Internet Shakespeare Editions
http://web.uvic.ca/shakespeare/Annex/DraftTxt/index.html

http://web.uvic.ca/shakespeare/index.html

Internet Shakespeare Editions is useful for high school and especially college students. It has a good links page, and it also has Quarto and Folio editions of the plays.

The Plays of William Shakespeare
http://www.theplays.org

The Plays of William Shakespeare is a play search engine/concordance that helps students find certain words in their context for analysis and comparison. Each play has its own separate search engine, which can be useful, but also restrictive if you want to search in more than one text at a time.

Shakespeare Illustrated
http://www.emory.edu/ENGLISH/classes/Shakespeare_Illustrated/Shakespeare.html

Shakespeare Illustrated is a great site. One can go to an alphabetical listing of the plays, and then click on a variety of pictures of scenes from the play. It allows students to see numerous visual interpretations of the characters.

Ten Recommended Sites for Researching Shakespeare

1. First Search/World Cat

Http://www.oclc.org/firstsearch/

While this is a subscription service, many schools and universities enroll so their students are able to access the near-limitless resources. Depending on local tradition, you may not even have to be affiliated with a university to receive access. Purdue University, which directly funds its computer labs with taxpayer money, allows taxpayers to also use these tools. The best thing about First Search/World Cat is that it includes plenty of full-text articles, meaning that you no longer simply locate an article in one place and have to find it in another, but you have both on the screen in front of you.

2. Luminarium
http://www.luminarium.org/lumina.htm

This site claims to be "one of the finest collections of classical literary criticism on the Internet (1350 to 1660 AD)." The editor, although not named, claims that their facts are double-checked through the Norton Anthologies. The site features a wealth of information, including partial bibliographies, biographical sketches, artwork, etc. This site is the most visually pleasing of the sites and separates the information into three collections: Medieval, Renaissance, and Seventeenth Century. Within each classification are listings of recommended sources, a wide variety of authors to choose from, and collections of essays which are available in their full-text form online.

3. World Shakespeare Bibliography
Http://www-english.tamu.edu/wsb

This site earned inclusion because it serves as an example of what every resource site needs to be. The website is updated on an annual basis and is based on the print version of *Shakespeare Quarterly*. One of the more important benefits of the site is the way in which the information is divided. The two main divisions are general Shakespeare studies and studies of particular works. This saves researchers a great deal of time if they are attempting an in-depth study of a work or two. The site collects data internationally and spans various materials like books, journals, pamphlets, movies, etc. The archive to this site is very impressive because it compiles the data from the previous issues. This site is forever growing in the amount of data which it includes and is perhaps the most respected of all the Shakespeare bibliographies.

4. Literature Online (LION)
http://lion.chadwyck.com/

LION is a subscription service which is used by many American universities as a database for their libraries. This database focuses on a genre that is greatly overlooked by Internet sources, poetry. The database here consists mainly of full texts of poetry available between the years 1100 and 1900. The database contains nearly 250,000 full-text poems. The search engine helps users locate poems based on author, title, and even by key lines in poems. Furthermore, this site offers users a list of links to other sites that may be useful in their research. The biggest drawback to this service is that it too is a subscription service, thus limiting the amount of access that many may have to it. The database does make the reproduction of the poetry, either in file format or the printed form, fairly easy for users.

This site is updated on a fairly regular basis but does, at some locations, occasionally leave users with difficulties accessing it.

5. Early Modern Literary Studies
http://www.shu.ac.uk/emls/emlshome.html

This site is the first page that appears in the web page version of a Yahoo search for "English Literary Studies." The page serves as a home for a refereed journal that provides a place for Renaissance scholars to conduct their research and contribute articles and discussions. The site provides a search engine, allows users to browse any of the past issues, and contains an archive of all past issues. The site has also been influenced a great deal by the respected Cambridge Companion series of works. A unique feature of this site is the presence of discussion groups which allow a variety of people to debate certain topics or to even pose questions and receive responses from other visitors to the site.

6. Shakespeare's Globe Research Site
http://www.rdg.ac.uk/globe/

This site offers extensive information not on Shakespeare's texts but on the environment in which the writer's plays were staged. There is a solid research database of information regarding the Globe Theatre, costuming, acting, and the New Globe Theatre which provides a wealth of background material. In addition to the Globe, the site offers information on the other competing playhouses, giving users and researchers a well-rounded view of the world of drama in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

7. Shakespeare Resource Center
http://www.bardweb.net/

This site may not have the individual depth of some of the sites, but it does give a well-rounded view of all the information about Shakespeare. The most interesting section on this site is the discussion on the authorship of his plays, which is always a fascinating topic. The Resource Center includes many valuable links to other sites that can aid students with homework, researchers with sources, etc. The site also includes synopses of the entire Shakespeare canon, which can be extremely valuable when looking for information fast.

8. Shakespeare Research Resources
http://web.uvic.ca/shakespeare/Annex/ShakSites9.html

This site serves as a road map of where to get started on the web. There are incredible numbers of links offered here. Most major sites are included (such as Folger's and the World Shakespeare Bibliography), but researchers can also find lesser-known sites. The list of sites is also broken up based on the topics they cover: general sites, graphics and sounds, individual plays, reference, Shakespeare's life, the poems, and authorship. This is one of the better places on the web to track down information on the sonnets.

9. Shakespeare and the Internet
http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/

This is a site much like the preceding one: it is a road map for locating information on the Internet. Something nice that this site does, though, is include a separate link specifically for criticism. Otherwise, between the above site and this one, a researcher should be able to gain access to nearly any quality Shakespeare site on the web.

10. Sh:in:E- Shakespeare in Europe
http://www.unibas.ch/shine/

This is an ongoing project examining the effects of Shakespeare's work across Europe. The site offers writings on the entire canon of Shakespeare. Also included are some historically relevant background pieces, such as music, and an impressive number of links to Renaissance life that include extensive information on costuming, heraldry, etc. The site further offers examinations of popular uses of Shakespeare, so that one can conduct popular culture research here as well.

Other Sites

The Oxford Shakespeare: Search
    http://www.yahooligans.com/reference/shakespeare/index.html

Electronic Literature Foundation's The Plays of William Shakespeare: Each play with its own search engine, concordance, quotes, and other information.
    http://www.theplays.org/

I Love Shakespeare
    http://www.iloveshakespeare.com/

The Place 2 Be: Shakespeare's Sonnets
    http://shakespeare.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.geocities.com%2FAthens%2FTroy%2F4081%2FSonnets.html

Shakespeare's Language
    http://www2.pstcc.cc.tn.us/~hford/wslanguage.htm

Bard Web: Shakespeare Resource Center
    http://www.bardweb.net/