Grades 9-10 Playlist: Transforming Works

Aligns with CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.9:

- Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).

Welcome

Writers often are inspired by the works of other authors. For example, sometimes writers use a general topic or theme from another author's story. Other times, writers choose to incorporate specific characters, settings, and plots from earlier sources into their own work. In these cases, writers transform the original material to make it fit with their own artistic vision. Analyzing how a writer draws upon earlier stories can help readers better understand a text.

Objectives

In this playlist, students will learn and practice how to:

- analyze author choices about including material from other sources in their own work.

Review

Key Terms

- The **source materials** for a text are any stories, poems, plays, or other works that the author uses while creating his or her own text.

- When an author **adapts** a source material, he or she uses that material as a basis for his or her own text. **Adaptations** can resemble very closely their source material or they can loosely follow the spirit or theme of the original.

- When an author **alludes** to source material, he or she refers to a particular part of that material. He or she reminds the audience of the source material but does not incorporate a large part of the original story.

Exploring the Standard

William Shakespeare's plays often draw upon themes and events from classical mythology and the Bible. Sometimes he directly mentions characters from well-known myths, expecting his audience to recognize the allusion. For example, in Act I of *Romeo and Juliet* a character refers to Aurora, the Roman goddess of the dawn, to refer to Romeo's habit of staying out until dawn. In other places, however, Shakespeare incorporates the source material in more subtle ways.

Watch!

For a short biography of William Shakespeare and a discussion of how others have used his works as source material, watch:

- http://www.teachertube.com/video/william-shakespeare-213245

Shakespeare draws upon a section of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in Act V, scene i, of *The Tempest*. In *The Tempest*, a sorcerer named Prospero causes a shipwreck near the island he inhabits with his daughter, Miranda, and his servants, Ariel and Caliban. He strands, separates, and disorients the passengers of the ship in an attempt to get revenge on the man who caused him to be expelled from Milan, his homeland. At the end of the play, Prospero is reconciled with his enemy, intends to marry his daughter to the son of this enemy and return with them to Milan. He promises to release Ariel and Caliban and to stop practicing magic.

Prospero's famous speech below comes from the end of the play. In this speech, he calls upon all of his supernatural aids to help him complete one final task before he gives up his magical powers forever:

> Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves,
>
> And ye that on the sands with printless foot
>
> Do chase the ebbing Neptune and do fly him
>
> When he comes back; you demi-puppets that
>
> By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make,[5]
>
> Whereof the ewe not bites, and you whose pastime
>
> Is to make midnight mushrooms, that rejoice
>
> To hear the solemn curfew; by whose aid,
>
> Weak masters though ye be, I have bedimm'd
>
> The noontide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds,[10]
>
> And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault
>
> Set roaring war: to the dread rattling thunder
>
> Have I given fire and rifted Jove's stout oak
>
> With his own bolt; the strong-based promontory

Teaching Notes: Transforming Works

The goal of RL.9-10.9 is for students to be able to analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work. The following information contains ideas that teachers can incorporate into their classroom as well as additional resources to peruse and integrate into instruction as appropriate.

Activity: Classroom discussion

The sections in this playlist are meant to build on one another. They work especially well in a group setting. Class discussion can help students get a better grasp of each passage and the relationship between them.

Discussion Starter One: After reading Prospero's speech, what do you think of Prospero? What are his motivations? What is his relationship to the magic he practices and to the forces he relies on to accomplish that magic?
Possible Answers: Students may have mixed reactions to Prospero. Some readers find him sympathetic, especially in this scene where he is giving up his magic. Others do not read him favorably because he has manipulated most of the other characters in the play. At this stage in the playlist, it is important that students base their opinions about Prospero on the information they glean from the passage. Invite them to read the passage several times and allow for class time to address any sections of the passage that may be confusing to them.

Discussion Starter Two: Based on Medea's speech, what type of character is Medea? What are the similarities between this passage and Shakespeare's passage above? What are some of the differences between the two passages?
Possible Answers: Because this passage does not deal directly with some of the more horrific sections of the Medea story, students are likely to react favorably to her. As with the first discussion starter, encourage students to find specific examples in the passage that will help them explain their opinions about Medea.

Discussion Starter Three: Why would Shakespeare draw from Medea's speech in Prospero's speech in Act V? What does this reference add to the scene? How does it impact the way an audience might understand the character of Prospero?
Possible Answers: At this point in the playlist, students should have a basic understanding of both characters. Take time to make sure that everyone understands the relevant parts of each story and allow students to ask questions before they attempt to address this final discussion starter. Students likely will want to spend some time sharing their ideas about the implied connection between Prospero and Medea. They may wonder to what extent the Medea story is meant to influence how an audience understands Prospero's speech. The audience, like the students, may have many different reactions to this allusion. Encourage them to focus on the ways that their understanding of Medea's speech impacts their understanding of Prospero. Does it change how they interpret his motives? If students have widely differing views on this, it can be helpful to allow them to debate their views using information from the playlist to explain their answers.

Advanced Activity: Individual Research

A homework assignment that couples well with this playlist is an individual research project in which students find one contemporary (within the past 20 years) work that draws from one of Shakespeare's plays. Students should write an essay analyzing how the work incorporates themes or story elements form Shakespeare. Students should consider why each author, playwright, or artist decided to use one of Shakespeare's plays as source material.