

Designing Effective Projects: Projects in Action Anatomy of a Project Plan: 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](#).

Essential Question: *How does literature help us better understand ourselves?*

Before a Project Approach

Before introducing a project approach, Ms. Yost's high school English students read *Romeo and Juliet*, discussed the literary devices and plot development, and then wrote an essay about one of the conflicts from the play that related to their own lives. The essays had to be three to five pages and Ms. Yost graded them. Students were tested on their knowledge of the literary devices discussed.

After a Project Approach

After reassessing the unit, Ms. Yost decided to have her students apply the theme and issues of *Romeo and Juliet* to modern life and work on solutions to age old problems. They would explore the question: *How does literature help us better understand ourselves?* and consider how this definition may change across time and culture. They would investigate how Shakespeare still speaks to a 21st-century audience. Students would rank a list of social offenses at the beginning of the unit and connect those social offenses with the corresponding conflicts in the play. Next, they would research an age-old problem and present their findings and solutions to an appropriate audience. They would create products such as, a multimedia presentation, brochure, or Web site to share their message.

Challenges

In developing the project, Ms. Yost faced two challenges. First, she wanted to make *Romeo and Juliet* relevant to her students' lives. She also wanted to make a real-world connection for her students, and ensure that her students saw both the relevancy and the authenticity of the project.

Overcoming Challenges

1. **Relevance.** Ms. Yost decided to focus the project on the themes and issues of the play that relate to modern life. She developed an Essential Question that the students could relate to and that would connect the play to their own lives. This allowed for an exploration of how Shakespeare still speaks to a 21st-century audience. She made the content relevant to students' lives by having them investigate relevant social issues to those in the play.
2. **Connection to Real World.** Ms. Yost decided to have her students create oral presentations for an appropriate audience supplemented with multimedia presentations, brochures, or Web sites. These products identified the current needs and resources of the community and offered acceptable solutions. With this addition, the task transformed into a service-learning project, creating an authentic purpose and making a real-world connection through the community.