Hamlet: Red, an adaptation

Noelle Christine Youngblood
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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HAMLET

RED, AN ADAPTATION

by

Noelle Youngblood

Bachelor of Science
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1998

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

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ABSTRACT

Hamlet: Red, an adaptation

by

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Davey Marlin-Jones, Examination Committee Chair
Professor of Theatre
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Hamlet: Red, an adaptation proposes an in-depth method of teaching Shakespeare's works by reconstructing the literature so it is relative to the cultural context of its students. This proposal focuses specifically on Hamlet as studied by at-risk middle schoolers. Beginning with a vital teacher-student rapport, the process continues through selection of a text based upon the dynamics of the students, analysis and rewriting of that text based upon its themes that relate to the students, and final production of the completed adaptation.

Complexities arise when teachers, concerned with positively influencing each of their students, are faced with tremendous diversity in the classroom and inevitable constraints on instructional time. Bold, non-traditional teaching styles are sometimes required to reach our changing teen population. Evidence of these styles can even be found in our modern entertainment. For example, at-risk teens were recently depicted in the films Dangerous Minds and Stand and Deliver, in which the lives of these students were transformed because the teachers were courageous enough to be non-traditional. People with an innate passion for teaching are the types of educators who are willing to explore ideas like those asserted in this particular thesis project, which requires an open-mind and indiscriminate patience and love for students.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I began my undergraduate studies in the Honors Program at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in the fall of 1994. Graduating cum laude two summers ago marked a new beginning, rather than an end, to my academic endeavors. I began my graduate work in the spring of last year while working full time as a musical theatre teacher for grades K-8. I am now contracted at an exclusive private school to teach seventh and eighth-grade English and Drama. The expansion of my subject areas is exciting. I believe my literary knowledge was tremendously supplemented by my academic and professional theatrical background.

First and foremost, I give thanks to God for blessing me with diverse talent and the insight and passion to utilize these gifts for the benefit of others, specifically children. Since the age of thirteen, I had planned to become a pediatrician, hence my name, Dr. Youngblood. Because of financial constraints, my vocational plan was altered. Although sometimes a bit cryptic, God's plan proves better than our own. Instead of tending to the physical well-being of children, I care for their minds and hearts through teaching.

My mother is my heroine and a reliable example of an outstanding parent, student, worker, and friend. She has endured unimaginable hardships yet remains a selfless woman with constant morals. She is a pillar of strength and a fountain of wisdom and support. I thank Mom from the deepest part of my heart for her steadfast, unconditional love.

v
Presenting challenges and offering rewards, students serve as my personal and professional motivation. I thank every single one of the children's lives that was entrusted to me. As I served as their teacher, I learned the students have invaluable lessons to offer as well. Specifically, I thank my class of at-risk eighth-graders who journeyed with me two summers ago and have been the wind in the sails of this project ever since.

I would like to thank Davey Marlin-Jones for being a faithful mentor personally and academically. He has been one of my most honest critics yet most encouraging and wholehearted supporters. Davey, as I have come to know him, provided practical means of perseverance through difficult experiences. I am continuously in awe of his vast knowledge complemented by an unsurpassed ability to impart that knowledge to students. Davey is an articulate, trustworthy, and sincere man for whom I cannot find words to adequately express my respect, adoration, and gratitude.

I thank all the professors and staff who were generous with their time and efforts on my behalf. These contributions, coupled with my desire and diligence, have sharpened me as a student, teacher, and young woman.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1998, I experienced a valuable period of time with a small class of at-risk eighth-graders. I had the honor of being their Drama teacher and witnessing positive changes in their attitudes and personal and academic choices. We, as an educational unit, advanced the environment in our classroom to a level beyond mere curriculum. Instead, we chose to couple curriculum with rapport, therefore sparking within each student a sincere motivation to succeed. Furthermore, in order to succeed, the students learned the value of a team working together towards one common goal. In our particular case, the goal was to comprehend Shakespeare's *Hamlet* at a level that allowed the students to write and perform an adaptation that maintained Shakespeare's truths while modifying the context into one that was more relative to at-risk students' cultural realities.

I learned alongside my students about the cultural redefining of the traditional family unit, seemingly warranted exceptions to a natural moral code, and the extraordinary accomplishments one can achieve with the proper combination of desire, faith, and perseverance. This combination developed among my former students and myself. Our academic achievements include the adaptation of *Hamlet* of which we are very proud; however, the achievements that extend beyond the educational boundaries are invaluable. Personal connections and discoveries that were made during those summer months will last a lifetime. The creation that was born that summer has compelled me to further my studies, improve my teaching skills, and open myself to others' contributions, therefore bringing myself closer to my fullest potential...a lifelong journey, indeed.
Losing the Language

In order to fully appreciate Shakespeare's works, one must be exposed to his literature at a pace that allows for optimal comprehension. Moreover, one must receive the work at a relevant level of understanding. Some may argue "dumbing down" Shakespeare's plays loses the essence of his language. However, what good is the language if it is flying over the heads of its readers? I agree with director Michael Bagdanov who adapts Shakespeare's works in order to make them relative in today's society. I dare say my reasons for proposing adaptations are even more justified because the motivation is the enhancement of children's education. Opponents to the idea of losing Shakespeare's words face Bagdanov in the form of articles or even hindering a performance of an adaptation.

My critics enjoy a sturdier platform. For example, as a teacher, my former Drama students were a class of at-risk eighth-graders. A colleague claimed they were "the class from hell." The trimester began with the students sitting on the floor drinking soda and snacking on candy, disrespecting any attempts by the teacher to instruct. She had given up on the children. I had not. By the end of the trimester, these same students had co-written and performed an adaptation of *Hamlet*. However, this adaptation contained violence, murder and suicide. Critics of my curricular plans, including the aforementioned colleague, were concerned that these students, already at-risk of such dangerous lifestyles, were glorifying the horrors on stage in front of an audience. Our program notes explained that our adaptation "combines the message of how precious and fragile our brief lives are here on earth with the suggestion that gang activity disregards this sacred truth. In no way is [the adaptation] meant to glorify gang activity. Instead, it...attempts to reveal the severity of gang-related consequences through utilizing a master playwright's (Shakespeare) story as its framework. Violence seen during the performance...is not comical. It is...to show you a tragic story as an educational tool for society. We hope you...ponder the moral message we are sending to our audiences."
Equipped with such ideology articulated in this verbage, I thought I had a foolproof adaptation, thus a universal teaching tool. I was wrong. The adaptation was effective for that particular class of students. Another adaptation, probably of a completely different play, would be required for other classes of at-risk students and certainly for students from different socioeconomic backgrounds. I discovered this truth when my teaching career transferred into the private sector.

The principal at the new school had different concerns when I presented the project as a possible curricular plan. The students of this private school were totally unfamiliar with gang activity, therefore the goal of making Shakespeare accessible would not be attained. I would have to discover the issues that were important to my new students, collaborate with them to choose an appropriate play, and begin on a new project that would be infused with their ideas, rather than those of former students. My philosophy, I realized, was sound, yet my end products would vary drastically. More proof of this realization came from Michael Almereyda's adaptation of *Hamlet* that is set in the corporate world. This version is perhaps useful at the high school or college level with more sophisticated audiences. Again, the act itself of adapting Shakespeare's plays proves useful in order to relate the material to a specific group of people, but the adaptations vary considerably, as do people.

The above discovery and consequent adjustment in my proposed teaching method is, of course, necessary and welcome, for it improves the effectiveness of my instruction in the classroom. Although more intricate than I anticipated, my philosophy maintains that it is better to adapt a Shakespeare play to his readers' levels of comprehension so that they may grasp some, if not all, of this author's message. In later years, the readers may return to the same play and understand deeper messages that they could not fully appreciate before. However, this opportunity is missed if their first experience with the seemingly difficult language defeated them. On the other hand, if their first experience
was not defeat, they may read other works in Shakespeare's library with new understanding because the "lower" level of their first Shakespeare experience was palatable, therefore pleasant, instead of so threatening that they do not want to try it again!

Look at their Lives

I make these assertions because I strongly believe middle schoolers can learn to appreciate Shakespeare as well as older teens and adults. However, it is important for the students at this age to study Shakespeare's texts at a level that does not surpass their comprehension. Perhaps the best balance is to study the original text side-by-side with an easier adaptation. Films can also enhance the learning process. Imagine a middle school in a "rough" area of Las Vegas. The students are a diverse mix of ethnic backgrounds, including many Hispanics and African-Americans. Most of the students come from divorce situations or homes with relatives other than the parents raising them. At home, they also are exposed to guns, alcoholism, drug addiction, and non-marital relationships among their parents or older siblings. Because of this unfortunate lack of stability at home, many of the school's students have joined gangs or are likely to join in the near future. Many students drink alcohol and participate in a variety of drug use. Some have been hospitalized following an overdose, others have attempted suicide. These students are not rebels without a cause. They are severely insecure children left to fend for themselves in a harsh and unsafe environment. They are attempting to do just that in the midst of damaged emotions, ongoing struggles at home and at school. Many of these children want to please their parents and their teachers. They simply need instruction, support, and patience so they can succeed. Where does simple homework, let alone Shakespeare, fit into this challenging picture?
Red is an adaptation of Hamlet geared for an at-risk class of eighth-graders. It serves as an example of how my proposed method of in-depth teaching can allow for the study of classic literature while keeping the students interested and motivated because the material is recreated to directly relate to issues that are relevant to the students' lives. Hamlet was chosen specifically for the ideas of honor, family and other relationships that are present in Shakespeare's original work; these are the very ideas that have been redefined by at-risk students in their present environment. Depending on the dynamics of the students, a teacher should choose a play appropriate for that particular class. The process, of course, begins with building a rapport with each child. A teacher must be aware of the issues that are important to her students. These issues are apparent in the students' comments, appearances, and even lingo.

Jacquez was an at-risk sixth-grader who constantly disrupted my class. I noticed that the lingo of the students included the idea of "disrespecting" another person. After the class period had ended one day, I quietly but firmly asked Jacquez to sit down for a minute while the other students exited. I had at least built enough rapport with him that he complied, although reluctantly. I was sensitive to the fact that my simple request had already embarrassed him in front of peers. After the room was empty, with the doors remaining open, I matter-of-factly asked Jacquez if I "disrespected" him in any way. Without eye contact, he answered, "No." I requested (with the tone of voice that my request was not an option) that he, in turn, refrain from "disrespecting" me. We then shared a gangster fist-to-fist "handshake" which I accepted as his vow. I kept the discipline to a minimum for two reasons. One, I kept Jacquez from being tardy to his next class, therefore communicating that I respected his concerns. Two, I knew my attempt to correct his behavior would only succeed if I did not damage his pride. Minimal time and words allowed Jacquez to agree with dignity. Since it was his choice to agree, and not my coerced decision, Jacquez was true to his pride, therefore true to his word, and he never disrupted class again.
Colleagues warned that I was too much of a friend to the students. I agree that I care
enough about them to, for instance, give a handshake in their fashion, but I disagree that
actions like these communicate friendship in place of authority. I argue that a trusted
rapport with students is necessary before a teacher's authority can be as effective as
possible. After all, Jacquez was still disruptive in other classes that merely relied on
detention slips and "Sit down, shut up" tactics.

My current principal claims that I possess innate qualities of an educator. One of these
qualities is my discernment which allows me to discover the best approach to take with
each unique student in order to make a positive difference in their academic and personal
choices. For example, one former student with a chip on her shoulder was not displaying
any signs of an improved attitude despite a myriad of efforts from me. I resigned to
simply greet her at the door as she entered each day before the class period began. Since
I did not tread on her territory, I quickly earned her trust, and after about two weeks, she
was smiling and responding. Another girl was painfully shy, extremely distrustful, and
somewhat disrespectful; with my consistent encouragement and unwavering standard of
conduct, she transformed her barely audible voice into that of one of the lead roles in our
staged reading of the adaptation. A third girl was suicidal, cutting her arms and hiding
the marks with her sleeves; I pulled her sleeves back and covered the marks with my
hands. With almost no words, I had communicated that she mattered to me. She became
my technical assistant for the performance. This sensitivity to students is essential in
order to create a fundamental learning environment. Once established, this environment
unites two vital elements of effective teaching: connecting to the students' personal lives
and developing the students academically. This balance provides the tools necessary to
continue in the process of my proposed method of teaching Shakespeare.
Let them Labor

A play will be chosen based upon what themes it contains that ignite ideas within the students. The play should be co-written with the students, allowing them to adapt names of characters, brainstorm a plot that parallels the original text, and work in small groups on scenes. The process of creating the play with the students gives them a sense of confidence that they can read, write, comprehend, and develop their ideas into a final project of which they can be extremely proud. The sense of student-ownership in the adapted script also keeps the students motivated throughout the time it takes to complete the project. The students are studying original Shakespeare language and turning it into something of their own, a play they embrace fully with messages adapted to their world. Their comprehension of Shakespeare is enriched, and their drive to continue learning is fueled. The finished project should be cast and staged by the students in the class. Auditions should be held to cast the parts, or the students may hold an open class discussion to decide among themselves who should play each role. They should contribute to set pieces, costumes, and props needed for the performance. Other classes may be invited to view this performance when the play is rehearsed and ready. Student-made programs can be given to each audience member. One of my students, for instance, had unique, artistic handwriting. Instead of reprimanding Junior for doodling in class, I assigned him the artwork for the production. He then proudly and meticulously penned our program cover. The more responsibility that can be given to the students, the better. Their work, of course, should be supervised daily and approved at intervals along the way to ensure the finished project is appropriate.

Throughout the duration of the project, students will be able to learn much more than the content of Shakespeare's play. They will learn general play structure analysis, the foundation for writing their adaptation. They will learn Shakespeare's message and how it can be applied to something in their lives today. They will develop a sense of
community in the classroom. They will also gain self-respect and respect for their classmates. Students will gain skills they can use later in life, not just read a play because it was assigned, memorize facts for a test, and then expunge everything from their minds because nothing relevant makes it necessary and interesting for them to retain. Students can also be exposed to the different ways to analyze a play. For example, for this particular project, students will learn the basics of New Historicism. Their adaptation takes Hamlet out of its time and place while attempting to keep the meat of the play. With a new setting, the historical context of the original script is last on the list of concerns. Students deal with the issues before them, not the ones surrounding the text at the time of its birth. Students may discuss the pros and cons of this method, what opportunities it allows freedom for and what it neglects. This type of discussion keeps students on the topic at hand but expands their critical thinking skills, the type of skills they will depend on in years to come in school and communicating within relationships they build (Scott, 136).

When students are assigned such a significant project without the student ownership, they may very likely give up or not try in the first place. However, they are eager to not only finish the project but bring it to its fullest potential when this significant project lies almost entirely in their hands. Students will complete assignments that have relevance. They will come to class and be productive when they are given respect, given responsibility, given constructive criticism, and given a chance, two or more chances if necessary.
CHAPTER 2

LESSONS

For the purpose of this thesis project, I have created the script Red with the aforementioned class of at-risk eighth-graders. A class of diverse at-risk students with lifestyles leaning toward gangs would better learn from an adaptation that set Hamlet in a gang atmosphere and changed the Shakespearean language to gang lingo. Also, in order to accomplish some of the play's exposition in an expedient manner, a narrator was added. As the teacher of this classroom, I would allow this type of adaptation in order to teach the principles of this Shakespeare play and expose children to his literature while they choose the medium in which to learn (Trewin, 59).

With the simultaneous study of Shakespeare's Hamlet necessary to create an adaptation, the students are learning the classic literature and developing a modern version. In my classroom, they have studied Hamlet and created Red. This play is an example of the type of work a teacher may produce with her students if she chose to teach Shakespeare in the method I am proposing. The following pages are sample lesson plans that may be used throughout the unit on Hamlet as the students create their adaptation. These lesson plans cover the fundamental elements in a script's structure, so that the students may begin with at least an elementary understanding of how to break down and rebuild a play; the lessons also propel the students' critical thinking abilities to a level at which they transform ideas from the original text into equally meaningful yet more timely ideas of their own; as the project moves forward into writing and rehearsal of the script, the lessons provide examples of how students may articulate a theme from Shakespeare in their own words.
Teacher: Noelle Youngblood
Class: Drama 8
Unit: Hamlet
Lesson: PASTO

Instructional Objectives
Students will be able to identify the five main elements in a play's structure.

Materials
Paper towels marked with P-A-S-T-O, M&Ms

Procedure
1. Teacher will lecture on PASTO

P-Preparation—the necessary information revealed in the beginning of a play. (To make sure PASTO is understood in this lesson plan, Hamlet will be used as a textual example. PASTO does not necessarily have to be taught side-by-side with this play although it is an effective play with a clear PASTO structure. However, it is helpful for understanding to choose some play to use as concrete examples of the PASTO theory.) In Hamlet, we discover we are in Denmark, where a King has just died, his brother married his wife and took over the throne. We learn of the relationships between the other characters, namely Hamlet, the late King's son, his negative feelings towards the hasty remarriage of his mother. We also know there has been a ghost, who looks like the late King, that has been appearing to the guards nightly, but not speaking.

A-Attack—the event that breaks the play's stasis. Stasis is the action that is relatively uneventful before the main action of the play is set in motion. The ghost speaks to Hamlet, telling him of his murder by his brother Claudius, who now sits in the throne.
S-Struggle—all the conflicts throughout the bulk of the text. For example, Hamlet feigns
madness, struggles with thought and action, encounters problems in his relationship with
Ophelia, faces tremendous obstacles to prove Claudius' guilt, etc.

T-Turn—an event that turns the action of the play onto a course that was not predicted.
Laertes is stabbed with his own poison sword when it was intended for Hamlet, and
Gertrude drinks the poison drink that was meant for Hamlet.

O-Outcome—the events that conclude the main dramatic question of the play. At the
outcome of a play, there should be an implied inhale, a point where a new play could
begin (a new stasis). Hamlet kills Claudius, Horatio remains alive to tell the tale, and
Fortinbras takes over. The new play could be about the aftermath and Fortinbras' reign.

2. Students will form small groups and assemble M&Ms in piles on paper towels, one
pile per initial in P-A-S-T-O. The size of the pile should represent how important the
initial is to PASTO. For example, if one group decides that Struggle is the most
important part of PASTO, the pile on the S should be the biggest.

3. Groups share how they arranged their piles to represent order of importance of the five
points in PASTO.

4. Teacher lets students know that all five points are equally important, and that a play
needs each part of this structure, for one part leads to another (D. Ball).

Assessment
Students will individually write a 1-page paper recounting what PASTO stands for, and
explain each part in their own words (a brief paragraph for each part). Students should
use visual language in their papers as well as include the theatrical vocabulary terms.
For example, the paragraph on Attack might include the definition that this part of PASTO "breaks stasis." It might also be explained that Attack is like the first domino knocked over in a succession, or it is like a rock that breaks the surface of a pond.
Teacher: Noelle Youngblood
Class: Drama 8
Unit: Hamlet
Lesson: New Historicism

Instructional Objectives

1. Students will be able to identify the pros and cons of this method of play criticism.

2. Students will be able to objectively view their adaptation in terms of what placing the play in a different historical context better serves and neglects.

Procedure

1. Students will be divided into two teams, mixed male and female. One team will be pro-New Historicism, and the other anti-New Historicism.

2. In class, and as homework, students will research supporting evidence for their team's claims. For example, the pro-team may refer to modern films that successfully transfer Shakespeare's work to another time and setting while preserving the content of the play. The anti-team may cite articles that point out author's intent, historical, political, and personal events that may have shaped the literature. Thus, taking the play into another time and place may neglect its origins.

3. The two teams will hold a debate (Wofford).
Assessment

1. The winning team will be determined by amount of evidence, support of its claims, articulate arguments, and equal speaking time among team members. These four criteria guidelines will be known by each student ahead of time so they are aware of what is expected. The winning students each receive an A. The other team's students receive Bs.
Instructional Objectives

Students will be able to translate Shakespeare passages into their own words while maintaining script format.

Materials

An original *Hamlet* text

Procedure

1. In small groups, students will read an assigned passage from the original text and co-write the adapted version of that same passage.

Example:

Students Meagan and LeRoy, cast as Olivia (Ophelia) and Little Red (Prince Hamlet) respectively, are assigned Act 3, Scene 1, lines 87-160 (Wofford, 82-84). It partially reads:

HAMLET: —Soft you now, the fair Ophelia. Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins rememb'red.

OPHELIA: Good my lord, How does your honor for this many a day?
HAMLET: I humbly thank you, well, [well, well].

OPHELIA: My lord, I have remembrances of yours
That I have longed to redeliver. I pray you now receive them.

HAMLET: No, not I, I never gave you aught.

OPHELIA: My honor'd lord, you know right well you did,
And with them words so sweet breath compos'd...

The adaptation partially reads:

OLIVIA: Hi.

LITTLE RED: Hello...

OLIVIA: Look! You gave me this! (wearing ring)

LITTLE RED: No, I--

OLIVIA: And when you did, you told me you loved me!

LITTLE RED: I don't love you!
The original text continues:

HAMLET: I loved you not.

OPHELIA: I was the more deceiv'd.

HAMLET: Get thee [to] a nunn'ry, why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners...

The adaptation continues:

LITTLE RED: You should get yourself outta here...before you get hurt.

OLIVIA: Too late for that.

2. Groups exchange adapted scenes for peer-editing. The teacher should serve as final editor.

Assessment
The teacher may base grades upon the quality of the writing and the participation of each group member.
CHAPTER 3

THEORY

Throughout the progression of the semester, beginning with the study of the original text and theory, and moving into the writing, rehearsing, and performing of Red, theory is inevitably woven into the students' work on their project. For example, without necessarily spoon-feeding New Historicism to the children (or to you, my readers) a theoretical event is in the making as they rewrite Hamlet. Not only are they rewriting Shakespeare's play, but the students are reconstructing the family unit of his time. Traditionally, the family was a father and mother along with their offspring. Children, primarily daughters, lived under their parents' roof until marriage. In the event of a father's temporary or permanent absence, sons, usually the eldest, would assume the responsibility of being man of the house.

There was a system of honor in Shakespeare's time that is still in place today in the lives of my at-risk eighth-graders. If a father is killed, or a family member disrespected, the son would avenge the deed. Children in gangs also avenge wrongdoings against their family members. However, fellow gang members, rather than biological relatives, may be considered "family." The father-son unit may be replaced with a surrogate big brother-little brother bond. Cousins may care for younger cousins, older siblings often act as parent, grandparents and other distant relatives are commonly the primary guardians of students such as those in my former Drama 8 class. Interestingly, though, the honor system remains and seems at times even stronger than the traditional system, perhaps to compensate for the possible lack of actual genetic relation (Almereyda, 30).
In Red, a father is replaced with an older brother; a son becomes a younger brother; a girlfriend is substituted for a wife; an uncle is a cousin; the gang serves as the royal family; the warehouse supplants the palace. Yet the deception, the greed, the power, the loyalty (or lack thereof) remains steadfast in both scripts regardless of the years between them or the obvious gap in playwrighting expertise between the authors. Red parallels the strength of a father-son relationship to that of two brothers. Little Red's need to avenge his brother's murder is at least as strong as Lorenzo's need to avenge his father's death.

As the dynamics of the family change within the males' roles, similarities and differences can be found among the females as well. For example, in the time Hamlet was conjured, it was common for husbands to have many mistresses besides their wives. The generation that developed Red also lives in an era that still treats females with this double standard for loyalty. Females are raped into a gang, disrespecting themselves to sleep around with the males in the gang in order to belong to this family unit, while males are "jumped in," enduring a physical beating in order to belong. Men now are referred to as "players," allowed to have a steady girlfriend while it is considered macho to cheat on her with other girls. However, if a girl cheats on her boyfriend, she is considered a "ho," "skank," or "slut." On the other hand, females in the Red generation are much more outspoken than the females in Shakespeare's day. They have unsexed themselves at least enough to survive under their relentless conditions. They can use guns to kill just as well as the boys, their language is just as harsh if not even cruder, their bodies are not pale and chaste, and we can no longer expect their intentions to be to please their fathers and their husbands. They are survivors, almost animalistic in their protection of themselves and their children, though they are still children themselves. The females band together like animals, too. The men are still feared in a sense, but not in the traditional sense, but perhaps in a more carnal, physically intimidating way. Despite
all this unsexing of the females, there is still a God-given need for security that is left
gaping. It is no wonder Olivia can go mad just as Ophelia did.

Females are still protected under the system of honor in place in a gang. If a female is
killed, retaliation is likely. This honor system is not one of tradition as in Shakespeare's
time, but one of survival. A gang that does not retaliate will be weaker than its aggressor.
An honor system established because of a moral standard would be ideal, but these
children's circumstances in life change their definition of moral. In their minds,
unfortunately, it is perfectly valid to kill an aggressor against a member of their "family,"
which makes the traditional meaning of moral irrelevant. If we are to deal with these
children on their terms in order to make a difference in their lives, then Red does just
that.

Once a teacher has a project that is laced with her students' lives, she can use this
opportunity to transition from the academic arena into the students' realm of personal
choices. During the creation of Red, at least one entire class period was designated for
the discussion of the attraction of gang involvement and the reality of gang practices.
The students and I literally sat in a circle on the floor and discussed different body
markings that represented various gang feats. For example, Junior had inked three dots
in a triangle on his hand. These marks translated to Mi Vida Loca, or "My Crazy Life," a
universal gang saying. Hard-core gang members have these dots permanently tattooed on
their skin. The temporary ink gave me hope that Junior was still able to be reached
before it was too late. Class discussions like these also communicate to the students that
their teacher is not only aware of their culturally-produced behavior, but is open-minded
enough to converse about it without judgment. If students feel this type of unconditional
acceptance, the teacher has opened the door to influence.
CHAPTER 4

SCRIPT

The following pages represent the development of the script, Red. As students wrote each scene in class in their small groups, the teacher should collect the scenes, edit and type them, and have working copies available to the students the following day. In this way, students can see how their work is being developed into a finished project.

I am grateful that you are willing to journey with me for the sake of at-risk students and experience this adaptation of Hamlet. Moreover, I hope you are as excited as I am to enjoy the finished product. I have attempted to stay relatively close to the structure of the original play, but have chosen to eliminate Fortinbras for the sake of a concise script for eighth-graders to tackle. Other changes, besides names and relations, include means of death, a party instead of a play-within-a-play, and some abridged scenes for purposes of length, clarity, and consistency within this modernized version...enjoy!
RED
by Drama 8

Cast of Characters:

Narrator

Red (Ghost)...Ghost of Hamlet

Cee...Claudius

Trudy...Gertrude

Little Red...Hamlet

Olivia...Ophelia

Phil (Pops)...Polonius

Lorenzo...Laertes

Santo...Horatio

Rosendo(Rosie)/Marco...Rosencrantz and Guildenstern

Narrator: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. The play you are about to see has been written by the eighth grade Drama class. The students in this class will also perform their play in the roles of Red's ghost, Trudy, Cee, Little Red, Santo, Phil, Lorenzo, Olivia, and a schizophrenic young neighbor Rosendo (who sometimes thinks he is Marco).

Our story takes place in Las Vegas, Nevada. You will see the lives of members in a gang called The Midnight Kings. Their drama begins in a local warehouse, which they use as a hangout. Their leader, Red, has been shot. This death is believed to have been caused by a rival gang. However, as our story unfolds, you shall see...there may be a traitor among them...
Act I

Scene 1 (silent) Red lies dead on the warehouse floor. The rest gather around the body, some crying, some somber. Little Red bends down and shuts the eyes of his older brother.

Narrator: It is now two months later. Cee, Red's cousin, has taken over as leader of the gang. He has also started dating Red's girlfriend, Trudy. Red's brother, Little Red, is unhappy about the death of his brother and the hasty union of Cee and Trudy.

Scene 2 (silent) Cee walks with Trudy. Just before they go their separate ways, Cee stops, kisses Trudy on the cheek and slips his ring onto her finger. Little Red secretly watches from a distance, disgusted.

Narrator: Every night at the warehouse, Little Red's best friend, Santo, and the schizo neighbor kid, Rosendo, have been keeping watch for rival gang activity that may come too close to The Midnight's King's territory. Instead, they are confronted with something more mysterious...

Scene 3

Santo—Watch through that window, Rosie. If Spider's gang ever comes back, man...

Rosie—Chill, homie. We'll get 'em.

(Red's ghost appears)

Santo (pushing Rosie back)—What the?! Red?? Red!! Say something, man! Quit playin'!

Rosie—We gotsta tell Little Red about this, man!

(Ghost disappears)

Santo—Red? Come back! Say somethin'! (to Rosie) C'mon!
Narrator: It is the next day. Santo has been looking all over for Little Red to tell him about last night's episode.

Scene 4
Santo (running in)—Little Red!!
Little Red—Sup, man??
Santo—Hey, homie, I saw your brother...a ghost...in the warehouse!
Little Red—Man, you're trippin'!
Santo—Really, man! I'm tellin' you the truth!
Little Red—Quit playin'!
Santo—Be serious! (motioning for him to follow) C'mon!
Little Red—I'll go, but if you're lying... (playfully punches Santo)

Narrator: It is now evening. Santo and Rosie are taking Little Red with them to the warehouse. They hope Red's ghost will show up again and talk to his brother.

Scene 5
Santo—Right over here, Little Red.
Little Red—A'ight.
Santo—We saw Red's ghost on the roof.
Rosie—He was wearing a big, black, freaky coat.
Little Red—So where is he?
Rosie—He was right over there, huh, Marco?
Little Red—Who's he talking to?
Santo—Shut up, Rosendo. Get over here.
(Red's ghost appears)
Rosie—I'm not going over there! Look who showed up! There's Red!
Santo—Little Red! Look! I told you, man! It's your brother! Isn't it? Be careful, man!
Little Red—He wants me to follow him!
Santo—No, man! This could be a set-up!
Little Red—It ain't no set-up! That's my brother.
Santo—Watch your back, homie. Sorry, Little Red, but I'm outta here.
Rosie—Me, too! C'mon, Marco! Let's split!
Little Red—Oh, God! Red?!

Narrator: Red's ghost leads Little Red away from where Santo and Rosie wait for him. Little Red cautiously follows. Finally, the ghost speaks...

Scene 6
Ghost—Little Red.
Little Red—Is that you, Red?
Little Red—Red? Red. This is a trip. What happened to you, man?
Ghost—I got silenced.
Little Red—What?!
Ghost—You know, a gun.
Little Red—Who did it? Oh, man! Who did this to you?
Ghost—Our own blood.
Little Red—No! What do you mean?
Ghost—Our cousin, Cee, wanted to lead The Midnight Kings, so he had to get your brother, Red, out of the way.
Little Red—Oh, I'll kill him! Cousin or not! Man, you're my brother! *(thinks for a second)* Trudy! Oh, Red! I'm sorry, man! Your girl! What is she thinking going with him?! Ghost—She doesn't know, man. Leave her alone. She's trippin'. Her man died. She's hangin' on Cee. She'll realize. Just "take care of Cee," will you? You know what I mean.

Little Red—I'll get him.

*(Ghost disappears)*

Little Red—Red??

Narrator: Little Red is obviously upset about this news. How can he be sure this was the ghost of his brother? He decides to pretend to go crazy. He will tell Santo and Rosie about this plan, but he will not tell them what the ghost said until he can find out more on his own.

Scene 7

Santo—Oh, Little Red! You alright, man?

Little Red—Yeah, I think.

Rosie—So what happened?

Little Red—I can't say for sure. You understand, Santo?

Santo—Not really.

Little Red—I just need some time.

Santo—Okay.

Little Red—Listen. I'm not gonna be myself for awhile. Swear you won't say anything. Not about the way I'm gonna start acting, and not a word about tonight, or this ghost, or anything. Swear?
Santo—Swear, man.
Rosie—Swear. Marco swears, too.
Little Red—A'ight. Let's get outta here.

Narrator: It is now a few days later. Phil, Lorenzo, and Olivia are saying their good­
byes because Lorenzo is going to boot camp.

Act 2

Scene 1

(Lorenzo is whispering to Olivia...Phil enters)

Phil—Lorenzo, come here, son.
Lorenzo—Yeah, dad?
Phil—I want you to take care of yourself while you're gone.
Lorenzo—A'ight.
Phil—Bye, Lorenzo.
Lorenzo—See ya', dad.
Olivia—Bye.
Lorenzo—Remember what I told you.
Olivia—I know.
Lorenzo—Take care.
Olivia—You, too.

(Lorenzo leaves)

Phil—What did he tell you?
Olivia—Just something about my boyfriend.
Phil—Yeah, you and Little Red are gettin' a little close. I don't want you seein' him.
Olivia—Dad!!
Phil—At least not for a while... got it!?!?

Olivia—Whatever.

Phil—I mean it! It's not easy raisin' a daughter. I get worried.

Olivia—Fine.

Narrator: Olivia goes to her room. Little Red comes over briefly even though he knows now that he is not supposed to.

Scene 2 (silent) Little Red and Olivia are not allowed to see each other. Olivia is in her room painting, her back to Little Red as he quietly enters. He slowly goes to Olivia and stops just short of touching her. As he smells her neck and hair from behind, she slowly turns around with tears in her eyes. Their hands move to touch but draw back just before contact. Little Red takes a poignant last glance, and quickly turns to leave.

Narrator: Meanwhile, Little Red has also begun to carry out his plan of "not being himself for awhile." He purposely goes to talk to his girlfriend's dad, Phil.

Scene 3

Little Red—Hey, Pops! What's up?

Phil—Hi, Little Red.

Little Red—You don't mind if I call you Pops, do you?

Phil—No, you have for years.

Little Red—Well, I just figured it fitting since I don't know your name.

Phil—Little Red, you know my name.

Little Red—You know mine, but I don't know how.

Phil—You feeling alright?
Little Red—Always, Pops!
Phil—Sure?
Little Red—How can we be sure about anything?
Phil—You want to talk to Olivia?
Little Red—Who's that? Is she pretty? I only talk to pretty females.
Phil—She's my daughter...your girlfriend...she's pretty.
Little Red—Too bad. I'm busy. Bye, Pops!

Narrator: Phil is left alone and confused. He decides to ask Little Red's cousin, Cee, if he knows what's "wrong" with Little Red.

Scene 4
Phil—Cee! Cee!
Cee—Yeah?
Phil—Your cousin...he's crazy!!
Cee—What?
Trudy—What are you talkin' about?
Phil—He's talkin' all crazy and stuff!
Cee—Don't worry! Everybody knows Little Red's still trippin' out over his brother gettin' shot.
Trudy—He's not over it. (feeling guilty) I mean, I'm not really, either, but...
Phil—I think it's more than that. He's dating my daughter. I'm worried about her. I don't want her getting hurt. He doesn't remember her. I don't want Olivia with a loco.
Cee—It'll be fine, Pops. Call Olivia over here. Tell her we'll watch her and Little Red talkin'. He should be coming by the warehouse soon, anyway. If she's here alone, he'll stop to talk to her.
Trudy—She can't tell him we're watchin', though!
Phil—Fine with me, as long as Olivia's safe.
Cee—Little Red's harmless.
Phil—Okay... *(calling out loud)* Olivia? 'Livia!
Olivia *(entering)*—What's wrong, dad?
Phil—We need to see if Little Red's alright.
Olivia—Oh, no! What happened now?
Cee—Nothin'. He's just not himself.
Phil—Go talk to him. We'll watch from here.
Trudy—Don't say nothin' about us.
Phil—Go. We'll be here.
Olivia—Okay, if you say so...

*(Phil, Cee, and Trudy hide just before Little Red enters warehouse)*

Scene 5
Olivia—Hi.
Little Red—Hello.
Olivia—You okay?
Little Red—Hmm?
Olivia—Little Red!?
Little Red—You know me?
Olivia—Of course, babe! Don't do this!
Little Red—Do what?
Olivia—Look! You gave me this! *(wearing ring)*
Little Red *(trying to interrupt)*—No, I...
Olivia—And when you did, you told me you loved me!
Little Red—I don't love you!

Olivia (crying)—What is your trip?!

Little Red—You should get yourself outta here...before you get hurt.

Olivia (hurt)—Too late for that.

(Little Red walks away whispering to himself, "Sorry...I love you.")

Scene 6

Phil—Sweetheart, Olivia. I'm sorry, honey. We heard it all. You don't gotta repeat it.

Cee—Man, Olivia. I don't know what's with him.

Trudy—Yeah, he's messed up.

Phil—Maybe this is my fault. Maybe it's trippin' him out that I said he can't see Olivia.

(to Olivia) Honey...

Olivia—Oh, Dad, I don't know. What would make him say all that?

Cee—He must be loco.

Olivia (still crying)—Dad!

Phil—Let's get you home.

Narrator: Meanwhile, Little Red is dealing with his own crisis.

Act 3

Scene 1

Little Red—What should I do? There's no reason to live...maybe I should just join my brother. Look at what I just put my girlfriend through! Man, is this crazy plan even worth it? (long pause) It's gotta be. Red's my brother. I gotta keep going. (as if she is there) Sorry, Olivia. I wish you could see my side of this mess. You'd understand why I gotta do this, girl. (to himself) I gotta do this...for Red.
Narrator: Soon, there will be a party at Olivia's house to cheer her up and hopefully return Little Red back to normal.

Scene 2

(Doorbell)

Phil—Hey, Cee. You and Trudy are the first to get here.

Cee—And Rosie, Pops.

Phil—Oh, hi.

Rosie (to himself)—Marco, don't be rude. Say hello. (to Phil) Hey.

Phil—Olivia's in the kitchen. Go on in.

Trudy—Thanks.

Narrator: More people arrive at the party periodically, including Little Red and Santo. They have a plan. Little Red is going to entertain everyone at the party by telling a story...a story that has been planned to sound frighteningly close to what allegedly happened in Red's gang. Santo will watch the reactions of Trudy and Cee.

Scene 3

Little Red (privately)—Santo, come here for a sec.

Santo—A'ight.

Little Red—How do you think the party's goin'? Know what I mean?

Santo—It's time, ese.

Little Red—Make sure you keep an eye on them, ya' know?

Santo—Yeah, I got your back.

Little Red (to everyone)—Hey, listen, guys...you're gonna trip...guess what happened to this other gang my friend told me about...
Trudy—Come over here and tell us.

Little Red (seeing Olivia)—No, thanks, here's a more attractive piece of meat.

Olivia—Don't be rude!

Little Red—Nobody deserves respect! Look how fast she forgot my brother.

Trudy—Wait a minute! You don't know what I'm goin' through.

Little Red—Don't get an attitude! Just pointin' out the facts.

Trudy—Anyways...get on with your story...

Olivia—Yeah, tell us what happened...

Little Red—Don't worry...this won't take long...this story's about as fast as girls go through boyfriends. (looks at Trudy)

Olivia (hurt, sarcastic)—Oh, thanks a lot. What's that supposed to mean?!

Cee—Little Red, come on.

Little Red—A'ight. It was crazy, dog. There was this gang...like ours. Everything was smooth...’cept this one cuz was jealous of their leader. The messed up part was they really were cousins. I forget the fool's name, but that leader fell asleep one night at their pad after everybody left. His cuz came back, and, man, this is outta line...he shot him right in the head.

Olivia—Oh...my God.

Little Red—Cheap shot...when he was asleep...

Santo—His own gang's leader...his own cousin...that is so messed up.

Little Red—No, dog, it gets worse. That leader...he was goin' out with this one girl forever...but after he got shot, they all thought it was some other gang. She started goin' with that same cuz who shot her boyfriend.

Cee (uncomfortable)—Man...I...I gotta go.

Trudy—Cee, where's my ride?

Cee—Let's go then! (suspicious mumbling among the group)
Little Red *(privately)*—Santo! Did you see that?

Santo—Yeah, man...he's guilty.

Rosie *(rushing over)*—Little Red! Trudy wants to talk to you...Cee took off. *(Little Red and Santo exchange a knowing look)*

Scene 4

Phil—Are you OK?

Trudy—What's up with Little Red?

Phil—I don't know...Here he comes...

*(Phil quickly hides)*

Little Red—What do you want, girl?

Trudy—Little Red, what is your problem?

Little Red—My problem!? *(pushes her)* You're the one who's disrespecting Red! *(takes out knife)*

Trudy *(scared)*—Little Red!!

Phil *(rushing in from behind Little Red)*—What's goin' on here?!

*(Little Red spins around thinking it's Cee and accidentally stabs Phil in the stomach...Phil slowly sinks to the floor and dies)*

Little Red—Oh...my God...what have I...

Trudy—Look what you did! You're so crazy!!

Little Red—None of this would have ever happened...Trudy, you don't know what you got into...datin' Cee...a killer...

Trudy *(crying)*—Little Red, get away from me!!

Little Red—Look! *(Red's ring on his finger)* This was your true boyfriend! *(grabs Cee's ring on her hand)* What's this?! You're dirty! *(Trudy slaps him)*
Little Red—You're guilty! You're with a murderer! Holding the same hand that killed
Red! You didn't even cry for him! You're only cryin' now 'cause you're so weak! You
had to get another guy right away...and the guy who killed Red! Nice choice, Trudy!
You really know how to pick 'em! Go on! Cry! You stupid woman!
(Red's ghost appears...Little Red gasps when he sees it)

Trudy (doesn't see what Little Red is staring at)—What!?

Little Red (pointing)—Look! How do you feel now with the man you betrayed standing
right before you?

Trudy—What are you talking about? (to herself) He's crazy.

Little Red—Look! Don't you see him? (Little Red harshly grabs her face)

Trudy (crying out desperately)—There's nothing there!

Ghost—Little Red.

Little Red—Can't you hear? (Little Red shakes her violently)

Trudy (between sobs)—Just you...yelling at me...and...me...crying...confused...

Ghost—Little Red!

Little Red—My brother?

Ghost—She didn't know. You've shown her. Enough! The killer is Cee, not Trudy.
Revenge me. Trudy's done...

Little Red—I'm sorry...I'm so sorry...I didn't mean to hurt her (to Trudy) I didn't mean to
hurt you...

Trudy (realizing)—You OK? You're talking to a ghost?! You hear Red, don't you? Tell
him I'm sorry (looking around) Red? I'm so sorry.

(Ghost leaves after hearing this)

Little Red—Trudy?

Trudy (dazed)—Yeah?
Little Red—Do me a favor...break up with Cee.

Trudy—What am I gonna say?!

Little Red(pointing to Phil lying dead on the floor)—What am I gonna say?(pause)

C'mon, Trudy...it's the least you can do...for Red.

Trudy—Don't remind me...I feel so bad.

Little Red—So you're with me then?

Trudy—I understand what happened now...yeah, I'm with you.

Narrator: Everyone may not fully understand, but they suspect Cee is guilty of Red's death, and they begin to realize why Little Red felt he had to act crazy in order to carry out his plans of revenge. However, Cee wants to kill Little Red for exposing his guilt.

Act 4

Scene 1

Cee—Rosie, where's your meds?

Rosie—in Marco's pocket.(reaches in his own pocket)Here. Can you feed me my two pills now?

Cee—No, Rosie...It's not time...but you do need to share with Little Red.

Rosie—Huh? Why does Marco have to share his meds?

Cee—Little Red's crazy...everybody's seen the way he's been acting...he even killed Phil.

Rosie—Uh...I never killed anyone.

Cee—I know, Rosendo...don't worry. We just need to give some meds to Little Red.

Rosie—OK.(gives Cee the bottle of pills)

Cee(pouring whole bottle into a drink)—Here. Take this to him.
Scene 2

Rosie—Little Red? Little Red! Here. Cee wanted you to drink this.

Little Red (suspicious)—No, thanks, Rosendo. I'm not thirsty. You misunderstood. Cee wanted you to have it.

Rosie—Oh. (drinks...start to feel the effects of the poison...speaking slowly) Little Red? Can I lay down? I don't feel so good. (Rosie lies down slowly and dies)

Little Red—Rosendo, I'm sorry, man.

Narrator: Little Red continues his struggle for revenge. However, once again, his plans are delayed. Lorenzo has returned from boot camp with word of his father's death... and Olivia...well, Red's death, Little Red's behavior, and her father's death by the hands of the man she loves has pushed her far beyond her breaking point...

Scene 3

Lorenzo—I'm gonna kill him! Where's Little Red?

Trudy—Calm down, man.

Cee—I want to get him just as bad as you do, but we gotta make it look like his fault.

Lorenzo (to Trudy)—What are you talkin' about, calm down?! (to Cee) What do you got in mind? This better be good, man. This is for my dad.

Cee—Look. Everyone knows you guys are gonna end up having a fight. You could put poison on your knife. That way, even if you barely cut him, the poison will go through his blood and kill him slowly, but no one will blame you.

Trudy (nervous)—But...

Lorenzo—What if I don't cut him?
Cee—I got your back. This plan is gonna work. See...we'll have a drink poisoned, too. You know he'll get thirsty from fightin'.

Lorenzo—Alright, alright. Where's my sister? I need to see how she's doin'.

(Olivia enters the warehouse. Lorenzo goes to hug her...she runs, suddenly frightened. Olivia silently acts crazy for a few minutes, humming 'The Wedding March,' while Cee, Trudy, and Lorenzo watch in shock. Olivia alternately giggles, frowns, sobs, smiles, etc. while twirling small sections of her hair.)

Olivia(pulls some of her hair out and gives it to Cee)—There's a white rose...(accusing) for innocence...(pulls some more hair out and gives it to Trudy) There's daisies for you...and some for me (more hair)...for sorrow and repentance...but we wear our daisies differently because we feel sorrow and repentance for different reasons...don't we? Hm? (Olivia gives a queer little smile as she tucks "daisies" behind Trudy's ear, but Olivia holds her "daisies" like a mother would hold a nursing baby.) Uh-oh! (searching unsuccessfully through strands of hair in her hands) I would give you some tulips for loyalty, but they all withered when my old man died. (Olivia starts to sob) Here. (giving hair to Lorenzo, speaking with effort through tears) Carnations...for protection. (she pulls more hair out and scatters it on the ground, suddenly angry) And sunflowers...for knowledge! (Olivia runs off crying and laughing)

Narrator: From all her dreams of a happy life with Little Red being shattered, and everyone she loved throwing her in the middle of tragedy, Olivia sadly ends her life. (Olivia sprawls on the floor in a white wedding dress and veil, again humming 'The Wedding March,' rocking back and forth in a daze as she cuts her wrist. She slowly lies on the floor as she bleeds to death.)
Act 5

Scene 1

(Cee, Trudy, Santo are present as Lorenzo and Little Red enter the warehouse)

Lorenzo (pushes Little Red)—My old man and my sister are dead 'cause of you!

Little Red (swipes knife at him and misses on purpose)—What did you ever do for her?! I loved her more than any brother could!!

(choreographed fight scene... Trudy is getting more and more upset)

Trudy (coming between them to break them up)—Knock it off! (almost in tears and near fainting) I can't stand this! (takes a drink)

Cee—No! Not that drink!

(Little Red looks at Cee suspiciously. Trudy sinks to floor as Little Red runs to her, and Lorenzo stares in horror.)

Trudy (her body twitching as she chokes)—The drink! We're all guilty!

(Trudy dies with Little Red bent over her. Lorenzo takes a cheap shot and cuts Little Red's arm while he is not looking. Little Red spins around, grabs Lorenzo's hand, and makes him stab himself in the stomach with his own poison knife.)

Lorenzo (falling to his knees)—I deserve it. I'm killed with my own poison. (last breath)

Cee's behind it all.

(Little Red runs and stabs Cee.)

Little Red (yelling as he forces the poisoned drink in Cee's mouth)—How's that for killing my brother?! Destroying everyone?! You like the taste of revenge?! (Cee dies)

(Little Red staggers and eventually falls because the poison is going through his bloodstream.)

Santo (rushing to his side)—Little Red!

Little Red (weakly, but calmly)—It's OK, Santo. My work is finished.

(Little Red dies in his best friend's arms.)

The End
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

My thesis specifically proposes that at-risk middle school students, who normally would not be exposed to Shakespeare nor comprehend or enjoy his works, can appreciate these classics through a non-traditional teaching method that utilizes adaptation of the plays for the sake of cultural relevance to the children and requires a level of student-ownership on the project. This sense of ownership will gain and maintain the interest of students but challenges a teacher to be bold enough to teach in a non-traditional format, sometimes working literally on the floor with the students. Once children witness, however, that their teacher is not only a willing participant in class activities, but a positive model of how to participate appropriately and productively, the students are more eager to participate themselves.

Critics of my teaching style often refer to the rapport I build with my students as being too friendly rather than authoritative. Ironically, those same critics include colleagues whom I have observed with ineffective consequence to their students' misbehavior. Their students were speaking disrespectfully to the teacher and to other students, and seemed to be under no authority but their own. If my alleged overly-friendly approach negates authority, I find no solution in the above observations. My students work quietly and individually when required; they also cooperate in groups without becoming disruptive. I assert that this successful environment in the classroom stems from my requisite rapport with each student and my ability to provide relevance to the work.
Others specifically criticize the loss of Shakespearean language in adaptations. Although *Red* substitutes the original language, other adaptations may not find it necessary to completely use a new lingo. This decision would depend upon the dynamics and cognitive levels of the students. For example, when I transferred to private schools, the administration questioned the appropriateness of including gang activity in the curricular plans for those students who were not familiar with that lifestyle. This particular group of students may have been at a higher level of comprehension, and therefore theoretically may have created an adaptation that preserved some of the original text. Similar to the various versions of the Bible, there can be numerous adaptations of a play, without one being superior to another, only more appropriate for its target audience. One would not use a King James version of the Bible to teach a toddler about Noah and the ark.

*Red* would have never been possible without the exploration of the world of at-risk eighth-graders. Through this exploration, not only was a wonderful adaptation created, but a wealth of insight was gained. I now know how to prepare for critical responses to non-traditional endeavors. Although most responses to the final performance of *Red* were very positive, there were obstacles along the way that forced me to stay focused on my goal, namely, the children. As teachers, we must always remain focused on the students. This simplified principle has helped me overcome obstacles that have surfaced since the initiation of this project. I am continuously learning how to remain faithful to the cause of children while maintaining the necessary flexibility that the teaching profession requires.

Because some of the issues that were addressed throughout this particular experience were gender-based, I have pondered writing a series of books in the near future. I plan to cover, basically, the struggles of being a female, from childhood to maturity. Included within this series will be helpful insights for women to understand themselves and for men to be able to better communicate with the females who are a part of their lives.
It is still amazing to me that a small seed of a project could blossom into unknown possibilities. Although I cannot keep track of each one of my students' lives, I long to prove that something significant was ignited within. In the meantime, I find my efforts fulfilled in simple pleasures like reading a note from one of my students at the close of the school year that expresses, "You have made such a difference in my life. I will never forget you. Thank You, Ciara." For me, this is all the proof I need that my non-traditional method of teaching is academically and personally effective.
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*Drama 8 students. Brinley Middle School, 1998-2000.*
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