

## Supplementing Shakespeare: Why Young Adult Novelizations Belong in the Classroom

**W**hat if Ophelia had been more like the assertive Juliet? Might she have been able to save Hamlet and her nation from tragedy? “Yes,” answers the young adult novel *Dating Hamlet* (Fiedler, 2002). In it, an intelligent Ophelia uses a sleeping potion to fake her drowning death and, with Hamlet, escapes the corruption of Denmark for—where else?—Verona. Because it is so radical, *Dating Hamlet* may seem like an isolated instance of our ongoing engagement with the *what ifs* so tantalizingly presented by Shakespeare’s plays. But along with its sister texts *Romeo’s Ex* (Fiedler, 2006), *Saving Juliet* (Selfors, 2008), and *Ophelia* (Klein, 2006), these works represent an effort by contemporary young adult novelists to refigure the plays for young readers.

Because of their fiery and likable heroines, extended love scenes, and frequent and heated disagreements between the main characters and authority figures, these novels seem to perform as chick lit for young adult readers. Indeed, they have already gone “viral.” Yet, young readers are far more likely to encounter one of these novels in the public library or from a friend than in the classroom. Why? we wonder. We believe these novels belong not merely in libraries, but also in the secondary classroom. There, they become an ideal vehicle for teachers who seek to enable their students not only to identify with the plays’ characters, but to critique their themes.

### Theoretical Concerns

There is, of course, a long history of revising Shakespeare in order to better introduce young readers to

the plays. Bowdler’s (1807) *The Family Shakespeare* and the Lambs’ (1807) *Tales from Shakespeare* excised or softened objectionable elements, while Cowden Clarke’s (1850) *The Girlhood of Shakespeare’s Heroines* imagined the childhood and adolescent years of the heroines for young Victorian women. In these early examples and in more recent efforts to adapt Shakespeare for young people—such as Nesbit’s (1897) *The Children’s Shakespeare* and (1907) *Beautiful Stories from Shakespeare*, Burdett’s (1994–2002) *Shakespeare Can Be Fun* series, or Coville’s (1996–2007) *William Shakespeare* series—there seem to be two significant assumptions at work.

The first is the notion that Shakespeare’s plays are valuable and necessary reading. As Bottoms (2000) asserts, “So accepted has the idea become that Shakespeare should be taught to children that we hardly query why or where it arose” (p. 11). Garber’s (2008) point that the plays have “almost always seemed to coincide with the times in which they are read” (p. xii) suggests why many, as Dakin (2009) puts it, believe Shakespeare “transcends the isolation of the human being and the barriers of time, place, gender, race, and status that divide us” (p. xiv). This widely held belief in the universality of the plays explains not only older efforts like those of Bowdler, the Lambs, and Clarke to bring Shakespeare to young people, but also our continued reliance on Shakespeare in the secondary classroom and the recent growth in texts presenting Shakespeare to children. Yet the idea of Shakespeare as required reading fits awkwardly with the second most frequently made assumption about

his work: that it is somehow not suitable, as is, for young readers.

Many worry that the difficult and freighted Renaissance language of the plays may present comprehension problems. The plots, however, are generally believed to be readily accessible. Here is where Fiedler, Klein, and Selfors break with the approaches of other writers. Not only does each seek to incorporate something of the flavor of Renaissance English into her style, but each is also unwilling to leave the plots unaltered, as do most contemporary adaptors targeting young people. We believe that this new approach is especially suited to helping teachers demonstrate the potential for varied interpretations and critiques to their students.

## Risks and Opportunities

Fiedler, Klein, and Selfors have identified the representations of women as sites necessitating radical change and have altered their own plots accordingly. When they do not wholly eliminate the tragic elements of *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*, these three writers dramatically soften them in order to offer happier endings for the heroines. Theirs is a project of resuscitation: the heroines are freed from their Renaissance plots and remade as characters whose personalities are both more accessible and appealing to contemporary readers. The weak Ophelia becomes self-aware and powerful, and Juliet becomes a young woman struggling to establish her personal identity.

Each of these four novels seeks to meet its young readers by adopting a single, female narrative voice. The generic shift from the dramatic form to the novel necessitates a corresponding turn of the writer's and reader's attention to a particular character, the narrator. Choosing a female narrator radically readjusts our attention to focus on the heroines or on the invented main characters, like Rosaline in *Romeo's Ex* and Mimi in *Saving Juliet*, who serve as their foils. The books thus invite the young female readers who clearly are, given their covers' prominent depiction of adolescent women, the target audience to reimagine *Hamlet* from Ophelia's perspective or to insert themselves into the story of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Yet this invitation can present dangers, as we have suggested. While combining our voices with Shakespeare's can lend us his authority, it can also

require us to deal with attitudes and assumptions that are less than comfortable for contemporary audiences. Shakespeare's female characters rarely conform to contemporary ideas of femininity. Characters like Ophelia and Juliet hardly do so, and Fiedler, Selfors, and Klein are thus at pains to present them as feminist characters. Where this proves difficult (especially in the case of Juliet), they intercede by creating an additional character whose beliefs and behaviors match those of the young adult reader.

Approaching the texts from a feminist standpoint can also run the risk of alienating young male readers who may be less attracted to stories of heroines discovering their girl-power. Yet the feminist approach offers teachers a valuable opportunity. The novels allow for attention to the real historical circumstances of women in the period. Admittedly, such questions may be more immediately appealing to young women than to young men. But for young men as well as women, the questions these texts raise can encourage discussion about just what our contemporary perspectives on gender roles are. They can thus aid teachers in helping young adult readers of both genders develop into critical consumers of Shakespeare and literature in general by questioning the assertions and assumptions of canonical texts rather than remaining passive receivers of them.

The relative ease (compared to finding time and resources for performance and video) of bringing a book into the classroom for independent or additional reading is one practical recommendation for including young adult novels like *Romeo's Ex*, *Saving Juliet*, *Dating Hamlet*, and *Ophelia* in lesson plans for *Romeo and Juliet* or *Hamlet*. Another reason is theoretical. As Rosenblatt (1995) argues, young adult literature "offers the adolescent an opportunity to test his or her life experiences against the experiences offered in the text" (p. 42). It thus meets adolescents at what Carlsen (1980) identifies as a crucial developmental moment—the stage where concern with the self shifts to speculation about relationships with others and the wider world.

Because of this, young adult literature has recently made a place for itself in the secondary classroom, often as independent reading. Crowe (1998) reminds us that, "[T]hough alarmists may claim otherwise, young adult literature isn't meant to water down the core of literary study in secondary schools. In some

cases, young adult literature might serve as warm-up or bridges to classic works” (p. 121). Coville (2003) claims that his own adaptations are motivated by the belief that “if you tell your tale well enough . . . [readers] will follow it into new venues—venues into which they might not otherwise have ventured, such as Shakespeare in text or performance” (pp. 59–60). That is, young adult literature works as a bridge for young readers. In practice, teachers like Dakin (2009) note that their students enjoy the sense of “balance” that young adult literature as independent reading brings to the classroom; in the area of Shakespeare, particularly, “The students who chose to read the modern Shakespeare spin-offs consistently remarked that these books enhanced their comprehension and enjoyment of Shakespeare’s early modern text” (p. 212).

### **Dating Hamlet**

Because Shakespeare has presented her as an adolescent, Ophelia seems ideally suited to young adult adaptations, yet her passive role in *Hamlet* makes her difficult to relate to for contemporary young women. Fiedler acknowledges as much by noting on *Dating Hamlet*’s book jacket that the novel began in response to college classes in which she realized that “female characters like Ophelia always got a raw deal, so she borrowed them from classic literature and gave them the guts to change their own destinies.” This claim itself might be profitably interrogated by teachers and their students, who might choose to ask whether Hamlet is also given a raw deal and left with little choice as to his destiny. Indeed, his more decisive actions in the novel might assist young male students in critiquing the interiority and passivity that even adult readers can find frustrating in the play.

The novel also raises questions that are relevant to young adults emerging into their sexuality. Lia and Hamlet are in love, and they try to decide whether or not to move into a sexual relationship. The two are presented as equal partners. Though Fiedler includes a version of the famous “nunnery” scene, Hamlet does not reject Lia in it, for she collaborates with him to trap Polonius and Claudius. When Hamlet launches into the play’s famous speech accusing Ophelia of dishonesty and unchastity, he winks at her (p. 78), and she is confident enough in their relationship to marvel at his acting ability and “how gracefully these false-

hoods fall from his lips” (p. 78).

The author herself seems to wink, doubling the play’s dramatic irony, when, by inserting the actual text of the play into her own text, she presents Hamlet and Lia as actors. By rewriting Shakespeare’s plot, she overwrites the play, reducing the misogynistic rhetoric Hamlet deploys against both Ophelia and his mother to a game. She reduces the play’s significant anxiety about women’s chastity to a joke between Hamlet and Ophelia, who, like the strong young woman she is, informs him that she is not amused: “I prefer we talk not on your notion of frailty and women, sir. In fact, I warn thee—go not there” (p. 57). Putting the pop culture catch-phrase “don’t go there” into the Renaissance heroine’s mouth, Fiedler makes her sharp and sassy. Presumably, she hopes her young readers see themselves this way.

### **Ophelia**

While Fiedler’s Ophelia is exciting, appealing, and remarkably contemporary, Klein’s is a good contemporary post-feminist young woman constrained by her Renaissance period. And, as a creature of dual eras, her options are both limited and limitless. Klein’s *Ophelia* thus raises questions regarding the (im)possibility of self-determination, self-expression, and the exertion of power under a patriarchy, not to mention the anxiety of acting on or expressing sexual desire when that sexuality is socially and religiously regulated.

As a lady-in-waiting to Gertrude, Klein’s Ophelia is nicely positioned to reflect on and critique the status of women in the period. Young readers must wonder along with her why she faces double standards regarding sexuality. Teachers might encourage young men and women to debate the existence of contemporary double standards regarding sexual activity. Rozett (1994) argues that in her experiences reading Shakespeare with young people, such questioning marks the beginning of sophisticated reading: the “complaints, advice, questions, and firmly rendered judgments [of students] testify to a real engagement with the plays, however naïve these might seem to a seasoned Shakespearean” (p. 14). Rozett also suggests that readers who “confront a play on their own terms” can build “their own bridges to the values and conventions of remote time and place” (p. 14).

One such bridge between contemporary conventions and those of the past might be found in the treat-

ment of Ophelia's fellow lady-in-waiting, Cristiana. Cristiana longs to marry Rosencrantz, for love as well as for status. Here, students might be prompted to study the historical circumstances that linked status to marriage for women in this period and to question whether such a linkage still exists. Because Hamlet and Ophelia reject Cristiana's goals as unworthy, they set a trap for her: the two lead her to believe she is going to meet Rosencrantz and consummate their relationship, but actually set her up to sleep with Guildenstern. With her reputation in tatters, Cristiana becomes a subject of court gossip and even Hamlet rejects her as "a light one" (p. 80). Ophelia's response is conflicted. Guiltily, she realizes she has irreparably harmed Cristiana. Yet, as contemporary readers of both genders might, she notices a double standard: because Hamlet, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern are none of them "men of honour" (p. 80), they have no right to criticize Cristiana. She confronts him, insisting that "when you men wrong one of my sex, I cannot be silent" (p. 80). Male and female students might together debate whether Ophelia's criticism of Hamlet is justified when she herself has played a role in wronging her friend.

Ophelia's relationship with Gertrude in the novel is also fraught with anxieties about desire and infidelity that are simultaneously period-specific and contemporary. The Queen forces Ophelia to read to her from the bawdy *Heptameron* of Margaret of Navarre:

This was no book of prayer. I blushed and my voice was barely above a murmur as I read the tale of a noble woman seduced from her foolish husband by a handsome knave. . . . night after night, Gertrude and I spent an hour or more in such devotions, reading tales of love and desire. . . . I would go to my room heavy with guilt yet consumed by curiosity. (pp. 41–42)

Gertrude admits to keeping her reading from her husband, "a godly and proper man" who "would be grieved to know that I read such tales, which men say are not fit for a lady's ear" (p. 42). Furthermore, it will do Ophelia good "to learn the ways of the world and the wiles of men, so that you may resist them" (p. 43). In essence, while Hamlet studies at Wittenberg, Ophelia's education is limited to the reading of romance, Renaissance-era chick-lit. Ophelia's situation parallels that of contemporary young women to whom publishers aggressively market more highly and problematically sexualized young adult series like von

Ziegesar's *Gossip Girl* (2002–2007) and Meyer's *Twilight* (2005–2008). Young readers might be prompted to question whether their reading is similarly circumscribed.

While Ophelia feels repelled by and yet drawn to Gertrude's romances, she also struggles with her growing desire for Hamlet. Just as Fiedler's Lia does, Klein's character finds herself unable to resist Hamlet's persuasions. The scene in which Ophelia yields to Hamlet is fascinating, as readers can sense that Ophelia is naïve to believe Hamlet's pleading and melodramatic professions of love: "His voice broke with emotion as his fingers traced the outline of my lips . . . 'I vow to love you most truly and for ever,' he whispered in my ear" (pp. 101–102). At first, Hamlet's love seems like the genuine article as the two marry secretly the next morning. Yet his behavior toward Ophelia undergoes a marked change after their sexual encounter. Here, Klein sensitively renders young women's fear of being used in a way that may move young readers of both genders.

In Klein's version of the nunnery scene, Ophelia proves to have been misled and used. When Hamlet asserts, "I gave you nothing," Ophelia stage-whispers the reminder that he gave himself in marriage and asks, "Was that nothing?" (p. 145). Hamlet's reply is hardly the reassuring wink that Fiedler offers. Klein's Hamlet replies, "I did not. It was not" (p. 145); Klein's Ophelia is left to wonder "Why, oh why did I grant him my love? I am undone" (p. 148). While Fiedler's is a winking twenty-first century version, in which a half-smiling frown conquers double standards, Klein's scene is brutal. She emphasizes the enormity of Ophelia's mistake by literally sending the now-pregnant Ophelia to a convent, where she must act out a sort of penance before she can achieve true happiness and self-determination.

Despite her willingness to incorporate some historical reality (she is a former professor of English), Klein is careful to give Ophelia a happy ending. In the convent, Ophelia discovers a space where women

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find shelter from an oppressive system. However, because few contemporary women readers are likely to be seeking the monastic life, Ophelia gets a man as well. The fantasy is complete when, after she has established a place for herself within a generous and loving community and developed a secure livelihood (she works as a medic for the nuns), Horatio arrives to declare his love for her.

### **Working against Identification**

Despite their different treatments of the character's decisions regarding sexuality—which might be put down to differences in the personal moral agendas of the authors—both Klein and Fiedler insist on reviving Ophelia. Each has her surviving the dramatic events at Elsinore. Most striking, however, is that in each text, Ophelia finds the very same means for escaping—a sleeping potion she concocts allows her to fake a drowning death. The sleeping potion that saves Ophelia in both Klein and Fiedler is a crucial plot device in *Romeo and Juliet*, of course, but when young adult authors confront the famous teenage lovers directly, the same potion strangely proves less reviving. Part of the problem here may be a resistance to identification.

If we acknowledge, as Stephens (1992) does, that “Writing for children is usually purposeful, its intention being to foster in the child reader a positive apperception of some socio-cultural values which, it is assumed, are shared by author and audience” (p. 3), we can see the root of the problem. Romeo and Juliet embody a number of behaviors and attitudes that contemporary society would seek to discourage in young adults—including their nearly instantaneous decision to act on their sexual attraction. Their decisions are, at best, over-hasty; their willingness to deceive their families is troubling; and their suicides at the conclusion of the play are irredeemably tragic.

In short, the play can hardly be understood to fit comfortably into a curriculum that, as Isaac (2000) describes it, is contradictory, at the very least.

On Monday we invite students to join a debate about conflict resolution tactics. Tuesday we assign students to begin studying those peace-loving clans, the Montagues and the Capulets. Wednesday's health class is devoted to safe sex. On Thursday we explicate the balcony scene. Friday brings a lecture on mental health and preventing teen suicide. (p. 50)

In spite of such conflicts, the play continues to be

required reading in the secondary classroom because these themes are considered particularly relevant for adolescent readers. While Isaac acknowledges this, she also condemns “the decisions and conclusions the play provides” as being in “direct opposition to the sorts of behaviors we hope students will themselves employ” (p. 50). Her resolution of these oppositions is to claim “Teaching the play often means teaching against the play” (p. 50).

If *Romeo and Juliet*, despite its privileged position as cultural capital, requires such careful dodging from teachers, it is even more challenging for adaptors. As Pinsent (2004) puts it, “The extra authority conferred by a figure of the status of Shakespeare lends a good deal of conviction to the ideological position espoused, whether deliberately or involuntarily, by the novelist” (p. 116). In a culture as sensitive as ours regarding what young adults are reading and learning, an author needs to be especially careful to avoid enabling the kind of sympathetic identification with Juliet or with Romeo that would leave the text open not only to criticism but, given the current climate in communities across the country, perhaps even censorship.

### **Romeo's Ex**

The major characters in *Romeo's Ex* are not Romeo and Juliet but Rosaline and Benvolio. Invoked only by name in the play, Rosaline narrates most of the novel. Fiedler's Rosaline is an outspoken critic of sympathetic readings of the main characters. Rosaline, well aware of the biological facts of sex in 1595 (the year in which the novel is set), acts as a kind of sex educator to contemporary readers. In her role as apprentice to the Healer, a female apothecary and midwife, Rosaline has witnessed a string of catastrophes resulting from sexual activity—catastrophes that help her choose chastity. As she explains,

I cannot count them, these women young and old who have arrived on this doorstep—some bruised and bleeding from having been beaten by their husbands, others fallen ill from pining o'er men who refuse to love them in return, their anguish so profound that many hath e'en begged us to administer some evil draught designed to end their very lives and thus their misery. . . . And there are girls mine own age and younger, unwed, who come to us in mortal shame, asking if there is not a way to rid themselves of the growing babe inside them. . . . That is the condition of women in love. And I refuse to join their tortured number. (p. 38)



The list looks remarkably contemporary and may be more honest about the risks inherent in sexual activity than some of our contemporary curriculum.

Fiedler's *Rosaline* also offers a critique of the play's exaltation of the teenaged lovers' bond that may enable young readers to voice their own reservations about it. When Juliet accepts Romeo, Rosaline is there like a critical reader, questioning and probing her cousin: "I will admit, he is handsome, but dost thou not remember those hopeless, hollow declarations of love he showered upon me?" (p. 103). Readers see that Fiedler's Juliet is a dupe because, after Rosaline saves his life, Romeo believes he is still in love with Rosaline; he has reduced his love for and marriage to Juliet to a mere dream. When Rosaline reminds him of his marriage to Juliet, he tries to make up for the fact that he had forgotten it by vowing to Rosaline that he will now "love her [the dead Juliet] forever" (p. 225). Rosaline points to the absurdity inherent in such extreme claims of devotion. As she explains, "Your recklessness, yours and Juliet's, was an affront to true devotion. . . . You met and admired one another and impiously called it love. 'Twas quick and bright and dangerous and magical. But you did not *think* . . . did not allow for love" (p. 226). Such a speech makes clear that neither Romeo nor Juliet offers a model for young readers.

### ***Saving Juliet***

In Selfors's *Saving Juliet*, similar criticisms of the lovers are made. Selfors's heroine is Mimi, a girl acting in a contemporary theatrical performance of *Romeo and Juliet*. Like Rosaline, Mimi is also a critic: she claims, "*Romeo and Juliet* totally sucks because everybody just dies and none of the characters get what they want. What kind of ending is that, anyway? I'd totally write a different ending" (p. 28). She gets her chance when, in a fit of stage fright, she breaks a necklace that holds the ashes of the very quill Shakespeare used to compose the play and is magically transported (along with her co-star, Troy) to fifteenth century Verona, just as the Capulet party is about to begin. When Mimi meets Romeo and Juliet, she begins to wonder, "Could this be my story, not Shakespeare's?" (p. 112). Unlike Mimi, who wants to save Juliet from death as soon as she realizes it is a possibility, Troy believes that they must get Shakespeare's story back

on track. Teachers might encourage students to debate which choice they should make.

The novel also raises questions about how the characters define themselves in contrast to their parents' goals for them. Juliet has an unhappy relationship with her parents. So does Mimi, whose mother rejects her desire to become a veterinarian and forces her instead into the family business, acting. Like Mimi's own mother, Lady Capulet is overbearing and dominating. Selfors makes Juliet fight against her planned marriage to Paris by eating onions and telling him she has a boil on her buttocks to dampen his desire for her. The unwanted marriage is finally staved off when Juliet and Romeo (who also wants to escape from his family's expectations that he continue the famous feud) escape from Verona.

In essence, the novel raises the question of how young adults can assert their own identities. In an online interview with Smith (2008), Selfors identifies her novel less as a love story than as "a quest for self-discovery. . . . a girl trying to figure out who she is—like most teen girls, trying to find her own voice and find courage to let others hear that voice." But Juliet's struggle and eventual triumph are relevant to students of both genders. Teachers might encourage students to reflect on their own quests for self-discovery. Additionally, Romeo and Juliet's attempts to define their futures—unacceptable to their families in both the play and the book—can be highlighted by comparing the two texts.

### **Conclusion**

We believe young adult novelizations like *Romeo's Ex*, *Saving Juliet*, *Dating Hamlet*, and *Ophelia* can be more beneficial in the classroom, where teachers may direct students' reading of them, than outside it. Alone, not all young readers will be able to move from the pleasure of identification with the characters to critique. For example, a fan named Marisa writes on Selfors's website (Letters from Readers, n.d.) that "[W]e are reading *Romeo and Juliet* in my freshman

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english [sic] class, and every time a part in your book comes up and they say what really happens my best friend and I giggle because we are like that's not right, or that's not what really happens, or where's Troy and Mimi?" With more assistance, young adult readers might be able to articulate in more sophisticated ways what feels "not right" to them in Shakespeare's plays. A teacher might prompt a student like Marisa to question why Troy and Mimi seem more interesting to her than Romeo and Juliet. As Isaac (2000) reminds us, "[T]he defects of children's versions should not be mistaken as an argument for dismissing them. Instead, these flaws can be viewed as a terrific opportunity to enable young readers to become critical readers and astute interpreters of Shakespeare" (p. 9). And given that Shakespeare is, as Dakin (2009) puts it, "in the water supply" (p. xiv)—surfacing even in Taylor Swift's 2008 Billboard Hot 100 hit "Love Story"—it might be to our benefit to introduce young readers to what are, perhaps, more carefully considered efforts to adapt the plays.

Young adult novelizations are not replacements for Shakespeare but supplements. Yet their value as supplements can be remarkable. Miller (2003) cautions us that, "[O]f all the new audiences for Shakespeare, children and young adults are at once the most open and enthusiastic as well as potentially the most likely to be misdirected or even disappointed by their initial encounters with the Bard" (p. 2). We see contemporary young adult novelizations as a way to prevent some of that disappointment by reducing students' linguistic anxiety and giving them new points of access from which to identify with and critique the plays. With the careful interventions of a teacher, the revisions these novels make can help students to acknowledge the interpretive nature of any act of reading.

And the novels may be more beneficial than the film and theatrical performances that are often presented alongside the plays. Students coming of age in our visual culture may prove less capable of dissociating image and authority; the power of a film or play may shut down the multiplicity of interpretation that we wish to promote. Additionally, films may adhere closely to the original plot, foreclosing alternative readings. It is crucial, as Bottoms (2000) asserts, that when introducing young readers to Shakespeare, we "stand out of the way as much as possible, let them *be*

*there*, ask their own questions, even answer back in their own way, and 'think about it'" (p. 23). Film and theatrical adaptations may not allow us to stand far enough out of the way, but two texts that "disagree" may be positioned more equally than a script with a performance. They may, in fact, be literally set beside one another, page to page.

Though schedules are tight for teachers working within a strict curriculum, Shakespeare's status in the canon has always demanded more time than other works studied in high school English classrooms. The addition of another text will obviously increase the amount of time devoted to the already lengthy Shakespeare unit, but four to five weeks should be sufficient for teachers wanting to include young adult novelizations in the required unit reading. (The four novels described here—with the exception of Klein's—run to about 200 pages in fairly large type).

Alternatively, because the plots of the novels are modern and the language less rigorous, a few chapters in the novels can also be assigned, paired with the relevant acts of the play. Independent reading is a third option. During class time, teachers could focus on promoting responses that encourage a creative engagement with both play and novel: journal entries tracking responses to characters and themes; Facebook-style "status updates" for various characters; diagrams comparing the texts; drawings; dramatic readings; alternative endings; and, as final projects, either YouTube videos, storyboards, or written adaptations of individual scenes. Students could present their work to the class in groups organized by the teacher to emphasize the diversity of readings, which may provoke participation even from those students less likely to respond in traditional classroom discussions.

While the use of novelizations may not lend itself to the emphasis on testing mandated by the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act, it does offer the opportunity for more interaction, analysis, and creativity. We believe these promote more sophisticated reading strategies, which is surely the end goal, not only when introducing students to Shakespeare but to any text. And regardless of the format in which we encourage them to respond, students will gain authority and confidence in their interpretive capabilities through the effort to respond, just as the professional adaptor does. In any of our classrooms, we may be nurturing—or stifling—the creative minds who will, in the next decades, take

up the task of remaking Shakespeare. Perhaps reading these revisions of Shakespeare will inspire today's young adults to revisit this work on pages and stages and film sets of their own. For all their flaws, young adult novelizations like these four are part of the desire that seems to renew itself every few decades: to remake Shakespeare in our own image. Because they impact how contemporary adolescents interpret Shakespeare, the authors of young adult novelizations are inevitably helping to craft the "Shakespeare" that the twenty-first century will come to know; their efforts thus deserve not only a place in our classrooms but also the attention of adaptation theorists, Shakespeare specialists, and scholars of young adult and children's literature.

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