Correlation
This video segment accompanies *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare, found in Collection 11.

Background
Stratford-on-Avon, where William Shakespeare was born and grew up, was a popular location for fairs and traveling entertainers. Shakespeare’s father, John Shakespeare, was high bailiff (mayor) of Stratford in 1568, when Shakespeare was four years old. Among John Shakespeare’s responsibilities as mayor were greeting traveling actors when they arrived in town, watching a special performance of the play they wished to perform, and giving the actors a license to perform the play publicly if he liked it. After the actors were granted permission to perform, they unloaded their costumes and props from their cart into an inn courtyard and built a crude stage there. The audience gathered on the balconies of the inn or in the courtyard in front of the stage to watch the performance. Popular plays of the time included a comedy called *Ralph Roister Doister* and plays about great heroes, such as Robin Hood and his merry men, that incorporated sword fighting and dramatic dialogue.

Objectives
The aim of this lesson is for students to develop the following skills and concepts:

Viewing / Listening
- Students view and listen to the video segment “The Bard: William Shakespeare.”

Responding
- Students analyze and evaluate the video segment.
- Students connect the video segment to a specific literary selection.

Writing
- Students write a persuasive paragraph.

Skills Reinforcement
- Students use sources to research Shakespeare’s life.

Cross-Curricular Connections
- Students create a playbill.
- Students research Stratford-on-Avon.
- Students listen to music from Shakespeare’s time.

Summary
On the video segment “The Bard: William Shakespeare,” students are introduced to Shakespeare’s contemporaries—actors such as Will Kemp and Richard Burbage, and royalty such as Queen Elizabeth. The segment also includes stills from productions of Shakespeare’s plays, as well as pictures from places associated with Shakespeare, including Stratford-on-Avon, London, and theaters of sixteenth-century England, such as the Globe. The narrator identifies important events in Shakespeare’s life and times, from his birth at Stratford-on-Avon in 1564 to his death there in 1616.

Presentation
Before Viewing  Prepare students for viewing the video segment by discussing what Shakespeare’s name brings to mind. Some students may have seen one of Shakespeare’s plays performed on television, film, or stage. Ask students to discuss why they think plays were so popular in Shakespeare’s time. Why are they still important today?

Viewing (3:35 minutes)  Inform students that they are about to view a video that explores aspects of Shakespeare’s life and times. Ask students to determine what types of audiences enjoyed Shakespeare’s plays. As they view the segment, instruct them to identify reasons why Shakespeare’s plays were so popular.

After Viewing  Guide students through discussion by asking what kinds of plays Shakespeare wrote. Discuss with students why Shakespeare wrote about such a variety of subjects. Point out that the narrator says that most of Shakespeare’s plays were based on historical sources such as Plutarch’s *Lives* and Raphael...
Holinhed’s Chronicles. Ask students to consider why these stories would interest Shakespeare’s audiences. How is Shakespeare’s method of basing his plays on historical material similar to modern moviemaking? Ask students to identify past or recent motion pictures that have their bases in historical fact. Encourage students to discuss whether, as in modern moviemaking, Shakespeare might have deviated from the facts for dramatic effect. Do the students think that this dramatic license would increase or decrease the popularity of the plays in Shakespeare’s time?

**Extension and Enrichment**

Discuss with students the structure of the Globe and other theaters like it. Explain that the different viewing levels reflected social status and that the stage, which jutted out into the yard, was visible from several angles. Ask students to consider how this arrangement affected performances. Shakespeare’s audiences often interacted with the performers on the stage. Ask students to discuss how theater is different today: What was considered acceptable behavior by Shakespeare’s audience that is unacceptable today? To explore further how Elizabethan drama differed from today’s, see *Elements of Literature, Third Course*, pages 892–894.

**Cross-Curricular Connections**

Students may enhance their viewing experience by participating in one or more of the following activities. Allow students two to five class periods to complete projects. Many of the projects are suitable for students working in pairs or in small groups.

**Art**

➤ **Creating a Playbill**

Ask students to choose one of Shakespeare’s plays with which they are familiar, such as *Romeo and Juliet*, and to create a playbill to advertise a performance of the play. Encourage them to include drawings or paintings of characters or of a scene that they think exemplifies the subject of the play.

**Social Studies**

➤ **Researching Stratford-on-Avon**

Ask students to find information about contemporary Stratford-on-Avon, using resources in their school or community library, and to write short informative reports about what things relating to Shakespeare can still be found in Stratford-on-Avon.

**Music**

➤ **Exploring the Music of Shakespeare’s Time**

Have students find recordings of Elizabethan music that can be played for the class and discussed. What familiar instruments were used? If students play any of the instruments, such as drums, recorders, flutes, trumpets, or violas, have them organize a recital of pieces that would have been popular during Shakespeare’s era.

**For Reading and Viewing**

➤ **Books**


Highly readable short biographies of well-known writers, including William Shakespeare, are presented.


Words and pictures celebrate the life of William Shakespeare.

➤ **Videos**


This Shakespeare series BBC production is a full-length version starring Sir John Gielgud.


Excerpts from a Stratford Festival presentation of Shakespeare’s play are used to analyze the plot and characters.


This video examines the history of the Globe, its players and audiences, and how the theater affected the way Shakespeare wrote his plays.

**Skills Reinforcement**

Activity Worksheets

Reinforce students’ skills with the Activity Worksheets. In preparation for their work, you may want students to view the video segment again. Students can complete each worksheet independently in one class period or less.
Responding to the Video

While re-viewing the video segment “The Bard: William Shakespeare,” write short answers to the following questions.

1. To what modern form of entertainment does the narrator compare the murder, revenge, ambition, jealousy, love, and laughter of Shakespeare’s plays?

2. What is the recorded date of Shakespeare’s baptism?

3. What two professions did Shakespeare’s father have?

4. Whom did Shakespeare marry?

5. How many children did Shakespeare and his wife have?

6. What two functions did Shakespeare serve with Lord Strange’s Players?

7. What was Shakespeare’s first play?

8. How did the plague in London affect theaters in 1592?

9. In 1599, Shakespeare became part owner of what theater?

10. How old was Shakespeare when he died?
Connecting to the Selection


1. How would you describe Shakespeare’s early life?

2. What might have been some of the hardships in Shakespeare’s life?

3. If Shakespeare were writing today, what subject matter might he use for his comedies and tragedies?

4. In your opinion, why was Shakespeare interested in the story of Romeo and Juliet?
Critical Thinking Skills

Activity 3

Using Sources

A **source** is anything from which information and ideas are taken. Some books, such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, almanacs, atlases, and biographies, are specifically designed to be used as sources. Additional types of sources are personal interviews, magazine articles, computer information services, films, recordings, informative booklets, factual television programs, and a writer’s own experiences.

If you were writing a research paper about William Shakespeare’s life, why might you use the following sources? Give one example of the type of information you might find in each listed source or one reason you might consult that source.

**Dictionary:** ___________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

**Almanac:** ________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

**Atlas:** ___________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

**Encyclopedia:** ______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

**Biography:** ________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

**Magazine:** ________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

**Interview:** ________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

**Film:** ___________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

**Recording:** ________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

**Newspaper:** __________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Writing Skills

Writing a Persuasive Paragraph

In persuasive writing, a writer tries to convince readers about a certain point or points. In a persuasive paragraph, you may try to present your side of a controversial issue or just try to get an idea across. Persuasive paragraphs may be written as narration, description, classification, or evaluation. Narration relates events over a period of time, description includes sensory details that create a picture, classification relates a subject to other similar subjects, and evaluation includes the writer's value judgments about a subject. Any persuasive paragraph should state the writer's belief or argument, followed by supporting details and a convincing conclusion.

Ben Jonson, as quoted in the video, claimed that Shakespeare's writing was not limited to the age in which he lived, but was for all ages. Write a persuasive paragraph that includes the Jonson quotation and your argument in support of his statement.
Responding to the Video
1. soap operas
2. April 26, 1564
3. merchant and public official
4. Anne Hathaway
5. three
6. playwright and actor
7. King Henry VI, Part I
8. All theaters were closed for two years.
9. the Globe Theatre
10. fifty-two

Connecting to the Selection
Answers may vary. Possible responses are given.

1. The video narrator says that Shakespeare lived a normal boy’s life.
2. Some hardships in Shakespeare’s life were having his house and family in Stratford-on-Avon and working in London, meeting the demands of the theater, the plague in London and theaters being closed because of it.
3. Possible responses: newspaper stories, talk-show stories, books about real events, histories, the Bible, and other books
4. Responses will differ. Shakespeare may have been interested in the story because it tells of the loss of innocence and is a tragic love story.

Critical Thinking Skills
Using Sources
Answers may vary. Possible responses are given.
Dictionary: definition of the word tragedy
Almanac: dates of Shakespeare’s birth and death
Atlas: location of Stratford-on-Avon
Encyclopedia: details about Shakespeare’s life and Elizabethan times
Biography: details about Shakespeare’s family
Magazine: contemporary analysis of Shakespeare’s writing
Interview: specialized information from a Shakespearean scholar
Film: to evaluate a film version of a Shakespeare play
Recording: to listen to Elizabethan music
Newspaper: to read about the discovery of a manuscript believed to have been written by Shakespeare

Writing Skills
Writing a Persuasive Paragraph
Paragraphs will vary, but should be persuasive in style and structure and should include the quotation by Ben Jonson.