

9.1.2

Lesson 1

Introduction

In this first lesson of this unit, students continue to build the reading skills to which they were introduced in 9.1.1, and begin working with a new standard, RI.9-10.3. Students first listen to a masterful reading of “Letter One” of Rainer Maria Rilke’s *Letters to a Young Poet*, in which Rilke responds to a young poet’s search for guidance. Next, students independently reread pages 3–5 (from “Paris, February 17, 1903, Dear Sir, Your letter arrived” to “I am not able to name them specifically”), in which Rilke explains why he cannot offer advice on the young poet’s work. They then participate in small-group discussions to analyze how Rilke unfolds important ideas, such as the relationship between criticism and art and the intangible and inexpressible nature of art. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: How does Rilke introduce and develop an important idea in the first two paragraphs of “Letter One”?

For homework, students use a new focus standard, RI.9-10.3 or RL.9-10.3, as a lens for their Accountable Independent Reading (AIR) and conduct a brief search into the life of Rainer Maria Rilke.

Standards

Assessed Standard(s)	
RI.9-10.3	Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.
Addressed Standard(s)	
SL.9-10.1.b, c	<p>Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues</i>, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Work with peers to set rules for collegial discussions and decision-making (e.g., informal consensus, taking votes on key issues, presentation of alternate views), clear goals and deadlines, and individual roles as needed. c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

L.9-10.4.a, b	<p>Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on <i>grades 9–10 reading and content</i>, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase. b. Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., <i>analyze, analysis, analytical; advocate, advocacy</i>).
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Assessment

Assessment(s)
<p>Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson. Students respond to the following prompt, citing textual evidence to support analysis and inferences drawn from the text.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does Rilke introduce and develop an important idea in the first two paragraphs of “Letter One”? <p>① Throughout this unit, Quick Writes will be evaluated using the Short Response Rubric.</p>
High Performance Response(s)
<p>A High Performance Response should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify an important idea (e.g., the relationship between art and criticism). Provide text evidence to show how Rilke introduces the idea (e.g., Rilke tells the young poet, “any attempt at criticism would be foreign to [him]” and “Nothing touches a work of art so little as words of criticism” (p. 3) to suggest that criticism is not useful when considering art.). Provide text evidence to show how Rilke develops the idea (e.g., Rilke tells the young poet, “most experiences are unsayable ... and more unsayable that all other things are works of art” (p. 4) but he goes on to offer criticism, saying, “your verses have no style of their own” (p. 4) and “are not yet anything in themselves” (p. 5). He tells the poet, “Your kind letter ... managed to make clear to me various faults that I felt in reading your verses, though I am not able to name them specifically,” (p. 5) demonstrating that criticism is not a useful tool for responding to art.).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> confidence (n.) – full trust; belief in the trustworthiness of a person or thing criticism (n.) – the activity of making careful judgments about the good and bad qualities of books, movies, etc. tangible (adj.) – capable of being precisely identified endures (v.) – continues to exist; lasts kinship (n.) – relationship by nature, qualities, etc.; affinity
Vocabulary to teach (may include direct word work and/or questions)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> preface (n.) – an introductory part transitory (adj.) – lasting only for a short time
Additional vocabulary to support English Language Learners (to provide directly)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> poet (n.) – a person who chooses and arranges language to create a specific emotional response through meaning, sound, and rhythm letter (n.) – written or printed message to someone verses (n.) – writing in which words are arranged in a rhythmic pattern; poetry

Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
Standards & Text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards: RI.9-10.3, SL.9-10.1.b, c, L.9-10.4.a, b Text: <i>Letters to a Young Poet</i> by Rainer Maria Rilke, “Letter One,” pp. 3–5 (Masterful Reading: “Letter One,” pp. 3–12) 	
Learning Sequence: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda 2. Homework Accountability 3. Masterful Reading 4. Reading and Discussion 5. Quick Write 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 10% 2. 10% 3. 20% 4. 40% 5. 10%

6. Closing

6. 10%

Materials

- Student copies of the 9.1 Common Core Learning Standards Tool (refer to 9.1.1 Lesson 1)
- Student copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist (refer to 9.1.1 Lesson 1)

Learning Sequence

How to Use the Learning Sequence	
Symbol	Type of Text & Interpretation of the Symbol
10%	Percentage indicates the percentage of lesson time each activity should take.
no symbol	Plain text indicates teacher action.
	Bold text indicates questions for the teacher to ask students.
	<i>Italicized text indicates a vocabulary word.</i>
▶	Indicates student action(s).
💬	Indicates possible student response(s) to teacher questions.
❗	Indicates instructional notes for the teacher.

Activity 1: Introduction of Lesson Agenda

10%

Begin by reviewing the agenda and assessed standard for this lesson, RI.9-10.3. In this lesson, students are introduced to a new text, “Letter One” from Rainer Maria Rilke’s *Letters to a Young Poet*. Students consider how Rilke introduces and unfolds an idea in the first paragraph of “Letter One.” Students engage in evidence-based discussion as well as complete a brief writing assignment to close the lesson.

- ▶ Students look at the agenda.

Inform students that *Letters to a Young Poet* is an example of nonfiction and requires students to use the standards for informational texts.

Post or project the following questions for students to discuss in pairs:

How can informational texts be different from literature?

- 💬 Student responses may include:
 - Literature can include short stories, novels, drama, etc.
 - Informational texts are true rather than imaginary.
 - Informational texts can include information about history, science, etc.

- Informational texts may be persuasive, like speeches.
- Informational texts can include biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, and letters.

Instruct students to take out their copies of the 9.1 Common Core Learning Standards Tool. Inform students that in this lesson, they begin to work with a new standard: RI.9-10.3. Ask students to individually read the standard on their tools and assess their familiarity with and mastery it.

- ▶ Students read and assess their familiarity with standard RI.9-10.3.

Instruct students to talk in pairs about what they think the standard means. Lead a brief discussion about this standard.

Post or project the following prompts for students to answer in pairs:

What does the standard ask students to do?

💬 Sample responses should include:

- Consider how an author introduces and builds on an idea (or ideas) or events.
- Think about the order in which an author makes his or her points.
- Analyze the connections an author makes between the points (ideas or events) in a text.

How does RI.9-10.3 differ from RL.9-10.3? How is it similar?

💬 Student responses may include:

- Standard RI.9-10.3 deals with informational text while RL.9-10.3 deals with literature.
- Standard RL.9-10.3 focuses on characters, plot, and themes (central ideas), but RI.9-10.3 focuses on how authors develop and connect ideas and events.
- Both RI.9-10.3 and RL.9-10.3 consider the development of ideas in a text.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion based on student responses.

Activity 2: Homework Accountability

10%

Instruct students to talk in pairs about how they applied the focus standard RL.9-10.2 or RI.9-10.2 to their AIR text. Lead a brief (3–5 minute) share out on the previous lesson's AIR homework assignment. Select several students (or student pairs) to explain how they applied the focus standard to their AIR text.

- ▶ Students (or student pairs) discuss and share how they applied the focus standard to their AIR text from the previous lesson's homework.

Activity 3: Masterful Reading

20%

Have students listen to a masterful reading of “Letter One” by Rainer Maria Rilke, (pages 3–12, from “Paris, February 17, 1903, Dear Sir, Your letter arrived” to “I, as a stranger, really am. Yours very truly, Rainer Maria Rilke”). Ask students to listen for important ideas in Rilke’s letter.

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider posting or projecting the following guiding question to support students in their reading throughout this lesson.

What is an important idea in Rilke’s letter?

- ▶ Students follow along, reading silently.

Activity 4: Reading and Discussion

40%

Instruct students to form small groups and read pages 3–4 of “Letter One” (from “Paris, February 17, 1903, Dear Sir, Your letter arrived” to “whose life endures beside our own small, transitory life”). Post or project the questions below for students to discuss.

- ① Consider reminding students that this is an opportunity to apply standard SL.9-10.1.b, c by participating effectively in a collaborative discussion. Students may focus on setting goals for the discussion, summarizing points of agreement and disagreement, and making new connections in light of new evidence and reasoning.

Provide students with the following definitions: *confidence* means “full trust; belief in the trustworthiness of a person or thing,” *criticism* means “the activity of making careful judgments about the good and bad qualities of books, movies, etc.,” *tangible* means “capable of being precisely identified,” *endures* means “continues to exist; lasts,” and *kinship* means “relationship by nature, qualities, etc.; affinity.”

- ① Students may be familiar with some of these words. Consider asking students to volunteer definitions before providing them to the class.
- ▶ Students write the definitions of *confidence*, *criticism*, *tangible*, *endures*, and *kinship* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the following definitions: *poet* means “a person who chooses and arranges language to create a specific emotional response through meaning, sound, and rhythm,” *letter* means “written or printed message to someone,” and *verses* means “writing in which words are arranged in a rhythmic pattern; poetry.”
- ▶ Students write the definitions of *poet*, *letter*, and *verses* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

① Remind students to use their annotation codes, starring passages that include repeated ideas.

Instruct student groups to reread pages 3–5 (from “Paris, February 17, 1903, Dear Sir, Your letter arrived” to “I am not able to name them specifically”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

Which words or phrases in the title introduce an important idea?

- ☞ The title says the letters are written “to a young poet,” so the idea of poetry and language is probably important to the text.

What can you infer about the purpose of the young poet’s letter from Rilke’s refusal to “discuss [his] verse” (p. 3)?

- ☞ Student responses may include:
 - The writer of the letter wants Rilke’s opinion about the poetry and advice about how the young poet can improve his work.
 - The poet asked Rilke if his poetry was good.
 - He asked Rilke to offer him advice.

What is the impact of Rilke’s use of the word *foreign* in paragraph 1 on the meaning of his response to the young poet?

- ☞ By using the word *foreign*, Rilke implies that art and criticism are very different, almost as though they are from different countries or use different languages.
- ① If students struggle to answer this question, provide the following definition: *foreign* means “not related to the thing being thought about or discussed.”

Paraphrase Rilke’s statement, “Nothing touches a work of art so little as words of criticism” (p. 3).

- ☞ Criticism is not a useful way of understanding art.

How does Rilke further develop this idea in his statement: “[words of criticism] always result in more or less fortunate misunderstandings” (pages 3–4)?

- ☞ Rilke develops the idea that criticism is not useful by explaining that, in fact, criticism leads to misunderstanding and miscommunication.

What does Rilke believe is “unsayable” (p. 4)?

- ☞ Student responses should include:

- Rilke believes that “[t]hings” and “most experiences” are “unsayable,” or difficult to express in words (p. 4).
- Rilke believes that “works of art” are “more unsayable than all other things,” (p. 4) meaning that they cannot be expressed through language.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle with this question, consider posing the following questions:

Based on your knowledge of the suffix *-able*, what is the meaning of the word *sayable*?

💬 *Sayable* means “able to be said” or “able to be expressed.”

Based on your knowledge of the prefix *un-*, what is the meaning of the word *unsayable*?

💬 *Unsayable* means “not able to be said” or “not able to be expressed.”

① Consider drawing students’ attention to their application of standard L.9-10.4.b through the process of using word parts to make meaning of unknown words.

How does knowing that the word *endures* means “continues to exist; lasts” help you to make meaning of the word *transitory*?

💬 Since Rilke compares the life of a work of art to the “small” (p. 4) life of man, and since art lasts (endures) longer than people, transitory must mean “lasting only for a short time.”

Confirm that *transitory* means “lasting only for a short time.”

① Consider drawing students’ attention to their application of standard L.9-10.4.a through the process of using context as a clue to the meaning of a word.

What important idea does Rilke develop about criticism on pages 3–4 (from “Nothing touches a work of art so little” to “whose life endures beside our own small, transitory life”)?

💬 Rilke explains that criticism is not a useful tool for examining art because it is so hard to put the meaning of art into words. “Nothing touches a work of art so little as criticism” because “most things are unsayable” and “works of art” are “more unsayable than all other things” (pp. 3–4).

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Instruct student groups to read pages 4–5 of “Letter One” from “With this note as a preface, may I” to “I am not able to name them specifically”).

How do Rilke's responses to the young poet's work in the second paragraph develop an idea Rilke introduces in the first paragraph?

- Rilke responds to the poet by saying that in reading the poems he noticed “various faults,” but that he is “not able to name them specifically” (p. 5). Rilke is unable explain what is wrong with the poems, which reinforces his earlier statement, “Nothing touches a work of art so little as words of criticism” because “works of art” are “more unsayable than all other things” (pp. 3–4).

How does Rilke's praise of the young poet's verses introduce and develop a new idea?

- Rilke's response to the young poet praises his verses because they express parts of the poet himself: the poems “have silent and hidden beginnings of something personal” (p. 4). In this way, Rilke suggests that poetry and art should come from within, and be unique to the individual poet. Rilke develops this idea when he praises the last poem because it seems to have come from within the poet: Rilke says “something of [the poet's] own is trying to become word and melody” (p. 4).

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle with this question, consider posing the following scaffolding question:

What does Rilke praise about the young poet's writing?

- Rilke praises the fact that the poems “have silent and hidden beginnings of something personal” (p. 4). He also says that in the last poem, “something of [the poet's] own is trying to become word and melody” (p. 4). In both of these quotes, Rilke is praising the fact that the poet is expressing something personal and individual in his poems.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Activity 5: Quick Write**10%**

Instruct students to respond briefly in writing to the following prompt:

How does Rilke introduce and develop an important idea in the first two paragraphs of “Letter One”?

Instruct students to look at their annotations to find evidence. Ask students to use this lesson's vocabulary wherever possible in their written responses and to practice using specific language and domain specific vocabulary. Remind students to use the Short Response Rubric and Checklist to guide their written responses.

- ▶ Students listen and read the Quick Write prompt.

- ① Display the prompt for students to see, or provide the prompt in hard copy.

Transition to the independent Quick Write.

- ▶ Students independently answer the prompt, using evidence from the text.
- 🗨 See the High Performance Response at the beginning of this lesson.

Activity 6: Closing

10%

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to continue to read their AIR text through the lessons of new focus standard RL.9-10.3 or RI.9-10.3 and prepare for a 3–5 minute discussion of their text based on that standard.

Introduce standards RI.9-10.3 and RL.9-10.3 as focus standards to guide students' AIR and model what applying these focus standards looks like.

RI.9-10.3 asks students to “analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections drawn between them.” For example, students who read “Letter One” from *Letters to a Young Poet* might explain how Rilke introduces the idea of language as being an inadequate tool for expressing true experience, how he develops this idea, and how he draws connections between this idea and other ideas in the text, such as the idea that language (criticism) is not an appropriate tool for understanding art.

RL.9-10.3 asks students to “analyze how complex characters ... develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.” Students who read “St. Lucy’s Home for Girls Raised by Wolves” might explain how Claudette changes over the course of the story, how her changing responses to Mirabella reveal her character development, or how her visit to her parents develops a central idea, such as identification.

Instruct students to prepare for a 3–5 minute discussion of their text based on that focus standard.

Also for homework, instruct students to conduct a brief search into the life of Rainer Maria Rilke and come prepared to share two important facts about the author of these letters.

- ▶ Students follow along.

Homework

Continue reading your Accountable Independent Reading text through the lens of the new focus standard (RI.9-10.3 or RL.9-10.3) and prepare for a 3–5 minute discussion of your text based on that standard.

Conduct a brief search into the life of Rainer Maria Rilke and come prepared to share two important facts about him.