

9.1.2

Lesson 2

Introduction

In this lesson, students continue to analyze pages 5–9 of “Letter One” from Rilke’s *Letters to a Young Poet* (from “You ask whether your verses are any good” to “That is the only way one can judge it”), in which Rilke offers the young poet advice on how to determine whether he has a poetic vocation. Students explore how Rilke uses metaphor to discuss his ideas about art. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: How does Rilke use figurative language to develop an important idea in this passage?

For homework, students write a paragraph in response to the following prompt: Where, according to Rilke, should the poet find beauty? Students also continue to read their Accountable Independent Reading (AIR) texts through the lens of focus standard RL.9-10.3 or RI.9-10.3, and prepare for a 3–5 minute discussion of their texts based on that standard.

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 drawn between them.
L.9-10.5.a	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. a. Interpret figures of speech (e.g., euphemism, oxymoron) in context and analyze their role in the text.
Addressed Standard(s)	
RI.9-10.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).

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 use figurative language to develop an important idea in this passage?
High Performance Response(s)
<p>A High Performance Response should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify an important idea in the text (e.g., the idea that beauty lies within the individual, the idea that beauty can be found in the everyday). Analyze how Rilke uses figurative language to develop this idea (e.g., Rilke uses the figurative language of the “roots” to describe the “command[] to write” that one must have within oneself in order to be a poet (p. 6). This metaphor suggests that beauty or art can only come from the “very depths of [one’s] heart” (p. 6), meaning beauty lies within the individual and cannot be found outside oneself. At the same time, it develops the idea that art must come from necessity: the “command[] to write” that Rilke describes is as vital to poetry as the roots of a plant (p. 6).).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> facile (adj.) – easily done, superficial indifferent (adj.) – unconcerned solitude (n.) – the state of being or living alone
Vocabulary to teach (may include direct word work and/or questions)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None.
Additional vocabulary to support English Language Learners (to provide directly)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> roots (n.) – the parts of a plant that grow underground, gets water from the ground, and hold the plant in place

Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
Standards & Text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards: RI.9-10.3, L.9-10.5.a, RI.9-10.4 Text: <i>Letters to a Young Poet</i> by Rainer Maria Rilke, “Letter One,” pp. 5–9 	
Learning Sequence: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of Lesson Agenda Homework Accountability Reading and Discussion Quick Write Closing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10% 10% 60% 15% 5%

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 the assessed standards for this lesson: RI.9-10.3 and L.9-10.5.a. Students continue to explore pages 5–9 of “Letter One” from Rilke’s *Letters to a Young Poet* (from “You

ask whether your verses are any good” to “That is the only way one can judge it”) and analyze how Rilke uses figurative language to develop an important idea in this passage.

- ▶ Students look at the agenda.

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.9-10.4. Ask students to individually read this standard on their tools and assess their familiarity with and mastery of it.

- ▶ Students read and assess their familiarity with standard RI.9-10.4.

Instruct students to talk in pairs about what they think the standard RI.9-10.4 means. Lead a brief discussion about the standard.

💬 Student responses may include:

- Figure out what words and phrases mean based on the words around them.
- Think about how words might have different or multiple meanings depending on how they are used in the text.
- Show how a combination of word choices contributes to the meaning and tone of a text.

- ① Remind students of the following definitions introduced in 9.1.1 Lesson 1: *figurative language* means “language that expresses an idea in an interesting way by using words that usually describes something else” and *connotative meaning* means “a suggested or associated meaning in addition to a word’s primary meaning.”

Activity 2: Homework Accountability

10%

Instruct students to talk in pairs about how they applied the focus standard, RL.9-10.3 or RI.9-10.3, to their AIR texts. Lead a brief 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 texts.

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

Instruct students to take out their responses to the previous lesson’s homework assignment. (Conduct a brief search into the life of Rainer Maria Rilke and come prepared to share two important facts about him.) Instruct students to Turn-and-Talk in pairs about what they discovered about Rainer Maria Rilke’s life.

💬 Student responses may include:

- Rilke lived from 1875–1926.

- Rilke was Austrian and wrote in German.
- Rilke was only twenty-seven years old when he wrote the letters to Franz Xaver Kappus, the young poet in the letters.
- Rilke wrote the letters while living in Paris, where he moved to write a monograph on the sculptor Auguste Rodin.
- In addition to poetry, Rilke wrote one novel, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*.

Activity 3: Reading and Discussion

60%

Instruct students to form pairs. Post or project each set of questions below for students to discuss in pairs. Instruct students to continue to annotate the text as they read and discuss.

- ① If necessary to support comprehension and fluency, consider using a masterful reading of the focus excerpt for the lesson.
- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider posting or projecting the following guiding question to support students in their reading throughout this lesson:

What is the important idea in this passage?

Instruct students to read pages 5–7 of “Letter One” from *Letters to a Young Poet* by Rainer Maria Rilke (from “You ask whether your verses are any good” to “from your dreams, and the objects that you remember”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

Provide students with the following definitions: *facile* means “easily done, superficial” and *indifferent* means “unconcerned.”

- 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 *facile* and *indifferent* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the following definition: *roots* means “the parts of a plant that grow underground, gets water from the ground, and hold the plant in place.”
 - ▶ Students write the definition of *roots* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

What advice does Rilke give the young poet on pages 5–6 (from “You ask whether your verses are any good” to “a sign and witness to this impulse”)?

💬 Student responses may include:

- Rilke advises the young poet to stop “looking outside” (p. 5) himself by sending his poems to magazines and other people and comparing them to other poems he sees. Rilke believes the young poet should stop doing this because “[n]o one can advise or help [him]—no one” (p. 6).
- Rilke advises the young poet that he must go into himself to find out what makes him want to write and “confess” (p. 6) to himself; if not, writing is the same as dying for the young poet. If the young poet “*must*” write, then the poet must “build [his] life” around his need to write, meaning the young poet will have to focus every part of his life on writing.

How does Rilke’s advice to the young poet to “[g]o into” himself develop an important idea?

- Rilke’s advice that “no one can advise or help” (p. 6) the young poet in writing his verses suggests that Rilke believes beauty comes from within.

How does Rilke refine this idea through the image of the roots?

- Student responses may include:
 - Rilke refines his advice to the young poet about looking within to understand why he writes by suggesting that the “reason that commands you to write” (p. 6) may lie deep inside a writer. Because roots are what keep a plant alive and in the ground, Rilke uses the image of the “roots” (p. 6) to suggest how important and necessary this reason is in the person’s life.
 - The image of the “roots” (p. 6) refines Rilke’s idea that writing must come from within because it expresses how crucial it is for a writer’s reason to write comes from “the very depths”(p. 6) of the heart and not from “looking outside” (p. 5) at what other people think and believe.

① Consider using the image of a root to teach or review *metaphor*. If students are unfamiliar with the term, consider defining *metaphor* as “a figure of speech that describes a person or object by asserting that he/she/it is the same as another otherwise unrelated object.”

What kinds of poems does Rilke believe the young poet should avoid? Why?

- The young poet should avoid “love poems” and poems that have forms that are too common or stereotypical, forms which Rilke calls: “facile and ordinary” (p. 7). To write those kinds of poems well requires “fully ripened power” (p. 7), meaning the young poet cannot successfully write those poems without having developing further as a person and as a poet.

How does Rilke’s advice about the subject matter of poetry introduce and develop an important idea in the text?

- Rilke's advice introduces the idea that beauty lies in ordinary life. Rilke asks the young poet to find beauty in the ordinary. The young poet must create poems from his "everyday life" and the "Things around [him], the images from [his] dreams, and the objects [he] remembers" (p. 7), all things that come from the young poet's daily life.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Instruct students to form pairs and read pages 7–9 of "Letter One" from *Letters to a Young Poet* by Rainer Maria Rilke (from "If your everyday life seems poor, don't blame it" to "That is the only way one can judge it") and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

Provide students with the following definition: *solitude* means "the state of being or living alone."

- ① Students may be familiar with this word. Consider asking students to volunteer the definition before providing it to the class.

- ▶ Students write the definition of *solitude* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

How does Rilke's advice to the young poet on pages 7–8 develop his ideas about the role of the creator?

- Rilke's advice suggests a creator does not believe in "poor, indifferent place[s]" (p. 8), meaning there is no part of life without meaning or importance. Everything in one's life can be the subject matter of poetry.

How does Rilke's use of metaphor to describe childhood develop his ideas about writing?

- Rilke uses metaphor to describe childhood as "the jewel beyond all price" and a "treasure house of memories" (p. 8), meaning that childhood is incredibly valuable to a poet and full of memories and ideas out of which one can create poetry.

What does Rilke suggest will be the impact of the "turning-within" that he advises?

- Student responses may include:
 - Rilke believes that if the younger poet turns to his childhood feelings his "solitude will expand" (p. 8), meaning the poet's inner life will become richer, enabling him to go into himself to create art.
 - Rilke believes that if out of "this turning-within" (p. 8) comes poetry, then the younger poet will not care what others think of his work, because it will come from deep within the poet.

How does Rilke's discussion of childhood further develop an important idea in the text?

- ☛ Rilke's discussion of childhood further develops the idea that beauty lies within, because the young poet must create poems by "turning-within" (p. 8) to things deep inside him, like his childhood, which Rilke calls the "jewel beyond all price" (p. 8).

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Activity 4: Quick Write

15%

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

How does Rilke use figurative language to develop an important idea in this passage?

Ask students to use this lesson's vocabulary wherever possible in their written responses. Remind students to look at their text and notes to find evidence, and 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 students 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 5: Closing

5%

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to write a paragraph in response to the following prompt:

Where, according to Rilke, should the poet find beauty?

Ask students to use this lesson's vocabulary where possible in their written responses. Also remind students to use the Short Response Checklist and Rubric to guide their written responses.

Also for homework, students should continue to read their AIR texts through the lens of focus standard RL.9-10.3 or RI.9-10.3 and prepare for a 3–5 minute discussion on how they applied this standard to their texts.

- ▶ Students follow along.

Homework

Write a paragraph in response to the following prompt:

Where, according to Rilke, should the poet find beauty?

Use this lesson's vocabulary where possible in your written responses. Use the Short Response Rubric and Checklist to guide your written responses.

Continue to read your Accountable Independent Reading text through the lens of focus standard RL.9-10.3 or RI.9-10.3 and prepare for a brief discussion on how you applied this standard to your text.