

9.1.2

Lesson 7

Introduction

In this lesson, students begin their study of “Solarium,” a chapter from the novel *Black Swan Green* by David Mitchell. Students read and discuss pages 142–145 (from “‘OPEN UP! OPEN UP!’ holler door knockers” to “*Black Swan Green Parish Magazines* by her side. ‘To business’”), in which Jason, the narrator, first meets Madame Crommelynck, the old woman who delivers his poems to be published. In small groups, students analyze how the author develops characters in this excerpt. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: How does Mitchell introduce and develop the character of Madame de Crommelynck in the opening of “Solarium”?

For homework, students continue their Accountable Independent Reading (AIR) through the lens of a focus standard of their choice and conduct a brief search to answer three questions to give them context for the following lesson’s reading.

Standards

Assessed Standard(s)	
RL.9-10.3	Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.
Addressed Standard(s)	
L.9-10.4.a	<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> <p>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.</p>

Assessment

Assessment(s)
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.

- How does Mitchell introduce and develop the character of Madame de Crommelynck in the opening of "Solarium"?

High Performance Response(s)

A High Performance Response should:

- Analyze how Mitchell introduces and develops Madame Crommelynck (e.g., Mitchell creates a sense of mystery about Madame Crommelynck because Jason does not know what to expect from her, and then she ignores him when he enters the solarium. Jason's first sight of Madame Crommelynck involves "Cigarette smoke haz[ing] everything like in a TV flashback" (p. 143). Mitchell describes the vicarage, Madame Crommelynck's home, as a way of introducing the character; he describes the large, fancy building and the solarium with a "throne" and "Bookcases lin[ing] the walls" (p. 143). The setting suggests that Madame Crommelynck is a wealthy woman with an interest in books. Mitchell introduces Madame Crommelynck through Jason's detailed physical descriptions of her; Jason describes her as an "old but grand" lady "like she'd stepped out of a portrait" (p. 143). His descriptions introduce Madam Crommelynck as an old, proper, formal woman. Mitchell develops Madame Crommelynck as a straightforward person who helps Jason in an important way. When people ask her questions or for help, she tells them to "[g]o to the hell" (p. 144). Even though she is old and "not-agile" (p. 145), she delivers Jason's poems each month.).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)

- decoy (n.) – a person or thing that attracts people's attention so they will not notice someone or something else
- solarium (n.) – a glass-enclosed room, porch, or the like, exposed to the sun's rays, as at a seaside hotel or for convalescents in a hospital
- vicarage (n.) – residence of a person acting as priest of a parish
- planetarium (n.) – building or room in which images of stars, planets, etc., are shown on a high, curved ceiling.
- apparatus (n.) – any complex instrument or mechanism for a particular purpose
- timidity (n.) – lack of courage or self-confidence
- incontinence (n.) – lack of moderation or self-control
- propagate (v.) – to cause to increase in number or amount
- Inferno (n.) – hell

- rectory (n.) – house of a member of the clergy in charge of a parish
- agile (adj.) – quick, smart, and clever; or, able to move quickly and easily (Madame Crommelynck uses *agile* in both contexts within the same paragraph)
- gratis (adj.) – without charge or payment; free
- apprehended (v.) – taken into custody
- rapped (v.) – struck, especially with a quick, smart, or light blow

Vocabulary to teach (may include direct word work and/or questions)

- prized (v.) – pried; extracted, detached, or opened with difficulty
- trainers (n.) – British term for sneakers
- hazed (v.) – covered the air with fine dust, smoke, or light vapor

Additional vocabulary to support English Language Learners (to provide directly)

- quill (n.) – a pen that is made from a feather
- anonymous (adj.) – not named or identified

Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
Standards & Text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards: RL.9-10.3, L.9-10.4.a • Text: <i>Black Swan Green</i> by David Mitchell, “Solarium,” pp. 142–145 	
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 6. Closing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 5% 2. 10% 3. 20% 4. 50% 5. 10% 6. 5%

Materials

- Student copies of the Character Tracking Tool (refer to 9.1.1 Lesson 3)—students may need additional blank copies

- 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

5%

Begin by reviewing the agenda and assessed standard for this lesson: RL.9-10.3. In this lesson, small groups read the first pages of “Solarium” and analyze how the author develops the characters. Students engage in evidence-based discussion before completing a brief writing assignment to close the lesson.

- ▶ Students look at the agenda.

Activity 2: Homework Accountability

10%

Instruct students to talk in pairs about how they applied a focus standard to their AIR text. Lead a brief share out on the previous lesson’s AIR homework assignment. Select several students (or student pairs) to explain how they applied a 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 student pairs to share and discuss their responses to the previous lesson’s homework prompt. (Write a paragraph in response to the following prompt: How does Mitchell develop Jason’s character in the excerpts of *Black Swan Green* you have read so far?)

- ▶ Student pairs share their written responses.

- 💬 Student responses may include:

- Mitchell introduces Jason as a smart, creative teenager who struggles with stammering. Jason describes an early experience with stammering, which he names “Hangman” and describes in vivid detail. Jason says Hangman has “[p]ike lips, broken nose, rhino cheeks, red eyes ‘cause he never sleeps” (p. 26). This description highlights Jason’s creativity and demonstrates how negatively he feels about his stammering.
- Mitchell develops Jason as a boy who struggles with a speech impediment and fears not fitting in with his peers. Jason says, “I’d rather kill Hangman that way than let him kill me tomorrow morning” (p. 28), which shows how much Jason hates his speech impediment. Jason demonstrates his fear of standing out in front of his peers when he describes how he will have to speak in front of “Gary Drake and Neal Brose and [his] *entire* class” (p. 27).

Activity 3: Masterful Reading

20%

Have students listen to a masterful reading of pages 142–145 of the “Solarium” chapter of *Black Swan Green* (from “‘OPEN UP! OPEN UP!’ holler door knockers” to “*Black Swan Green Parish Magazines* by her side. ‘To business’”). Ask students to listen for how Mitchell develops Madame Crommelynck.

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

What do you learn about Madame Crommelynck in these paragraphs?

- ▶ Students follow along, reading silently.

Activity 4: Reading and Discussion

50%

Instruct students to form small groups. Post or project the questions below for students to discuss. Instruct students to continue to annotate the text as they read and discuss. Remind students to use the annotation code “CD” throughout the lesson for examples of character development in the text.

- ▶ Students listen.

- ① Consider reminding students to track character development on the Character Tracking Tool throughout the lesson.

Provide students with the following definitions: *decoy* means “a person or thing that attracts people’s attention so they will not notice someone or something else,” *solarium* means “a glass-enclosed room, porch, or the like, exposed to the sun’s rays, as at a seaside hotel or for convalescents in a hospital,” *vicarage* means “residence of a person acting as priest of a parish,” and *planetarium* means “building or room in which images of stars, planets, etc., are shown on a high, curved ceiling.”

- ▶ Students write the definitions of *decoy*, *solarium*, *vicarage*, and *planetarium* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the following definition: *quill* means “a pen that is made from a feather.”

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

Instruct small groups to read pages 142–143 (from “‘OPEN UP! OPEN UP!’ holler door knockers” to “He’d stopped, and spoke around a narrow door. ‘A visitor’”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

Based on the first two paragraphs of “Solarium,” who is Eliot Bolivar?

- 💬 Eliot Bolivar is the name Jason uses when he writes and publishes poetry. Jason takes a letter addressed to “ELIOT BOLIVAR, POET” (p. 142), and then refers to Eliot Bolivar as “me” and Eliot Bolivar’s work as “my work” (p. 142).

① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students are confused by the name Eliot Bolivar, consider asking the following scaffolding questions:

To whom is the letter addressed?

- 💬 The letter is addressed to “ELIOT BOLIVAR, POET” (p. 142).

What is the invitation in the letter?

- 💬 The invitation is for Eliot Bolivar to “come to the vicarage to discuss [his] work” (p. 142).

Pay attention to the pronouns Jason uses in the second paragraph of “Solarium.” Who writes Eliot Bolivar’s work?

- 💬 Jason uses the pronoun “my” (p. 142) to describe the work. Jason writes the Eliot Bolivar poems.

How do Jason’s words about “work” in the second paragraph of “Solarium” contribute to his development as a character?

- 💬 Jason repeats the word “work” three times. He is pleased that someone calls his poems work: “Nobody’s ever called Eliot Bolivar’s poems ‘work’” (p. 142). This shows that Jason is serious about his poetry.

Why is Jason at the vicarage?

- 💬 Jason is at the vicarage to “discuss [his] work” (p. 142) with someone.

Whom does Jason expect to meet in the solarium?

Jason expects to meet the vicar in the solarium; he says, “the vicar invited me” (p. 143).

How does Mitchell develop the setting as Jason enters the vicarage?

Student responses may include:

- The vicarage is old and odd-smelling. Jason describes the “worn floorboards” and “cobwebby chandeliers” as well as the smell “of liver and soil” (p. 143).
- The vicarage is mysterious. After Jason waits outside the door, the door’s “bolt slid[es] like a rifle” (p. 142) and the old man “glance[s] round the garden, as if [Jason] might be a decoy” (p. 143). The old man’s reaction creates a sense of suspicion that there might be something else going on.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students unfamiliar with British vocabulary are confused by the words *prized* and *trainers*, consider asking the following questions:

What does the old man say and do before Jason “prized [his] trainers off”? What can you infer about the meaning of *prized* and *trainers*?

The old man asks Jason to remove his shoes (p. 143). He also offers Jason a shoehorn, so *prized* likely means “removed” and *trainers* likely means “shoes.”

① In this unit, students do not read the end of “Solarium,” in which Jason realizes that the old man is Madame Crommelynck’s husband, not her butler. The end of “Solarium” also reveals that the Crommelyncks have been arrested, which may explain some of the old man’s behavior when Jason arrives at the vicarage.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Instruct small groups to read page 143–144 (from “This solarium didn’t have any scientific apparatus in it” to “Every now and then her bony fingers swept ash off the page”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

Provide students with the following definition: *apparatus* means “any complex instrument or mechanism for a particular purpose.”

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

How does Mitchell further develop the setting when Jason enters the solarium?

Student responses may include:

- The solarium is not a planetarium, as Jason expected. It is more like a library with “bookcases lin[ing] the walls” (p. 143).
- The solarium is smoky; “Cigarette smoke hazed everything like in a TV flashback” (p. 143).

How do specific word choices develop the old woman’s character?

💬 Student responses may include:

- Jason describes the old woman as “hazed” (p. 143) in smoke, which introduces her as mysterious or unfamiliar.
- The old woman wears a “royal purple shawl” and sits on a “throne” (p. 143), which suggests she is a powerful or influential character.
- Jason says the woman is “old but grand” (p. 143) and looks “like she’d stepped out of a portrait” (p. 143). He also describes her as having “silver hair” and wearing jewels “as big as cola cubes” (p. 143). This description shows that the woman is old and wealthy.

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle to analyze the old woman’s character development, consider asking the following scaffolding questions:

Consider Jason’s description of the solarium. Based on the context, what is the meaning of *hazed*?

💬 The old woman is smoking indoors, so “hazed” (p. 143) most likely means covered with a cloud of smoke.

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

What is the impact of the words “throne,” “grand,” and “royal” in these paragraphs?

💬 “Throne,” “grand,” and “royal” (p. 143) are all words that suggest power and status. Using these words to introduce the old woman develops her as an authority figure and someone who deserves respect.

How does the old woman react to Jason when he enters the room?

💬 The old woman ignores Jason when he enters the room. Jason wonders, “Should I cough?” (p. 144) to get the woman’s attention.

What is the meaning of the figurative language, “The clock ... shaved minutes into seconds”?

💬 This phrase describes Jason’s waiting for the old woman to finish her reading. It describes what Jason sees as he watches the clock intently.

How does the setting in the solarium contribute to the old woman’s character development?

- The setting reflects the old woman's character. Jason describes the old woman as though she is similar to the art on display, "like she'd stepped out of the portrait" (p. 143). The vicarage has "a velvet staircase," a "Turkish chair," and a painting in a "gold frame" (p. 143). This description mirrors the old woman's "[o]ld but grand" (p. 143) appearance.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Provide students with the following definitions: *timidity* means "lack of courage or self-confidence," *incontinence* means "lack of moderation of self-control," *propagate* means "to cause to increase in number or amount," *Inferno* means "hell," *rectory* means "house of a member of the clergy in charge of a parish," *agile* means "quick, smart, and clever; or, able to move quickly and easily," *gratis* means "without charge or payment; free," *apprehended* means "taken into custody," and *rapped* means "struck, especially with a quick, smart, or light blow."

- ▶ Students write the definitions of *timidity*, *incontinence*, *propagate*, *Inferno*, *rectory*, *agile*, *gratis*, *apprehended*, and *rapped* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the following definition: *anonymous* means "not named or identified."

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

Instruct small groups to read page 144–145 (from "My name is Eva van Outryve de Crommelynck" to "Black Swan Green Parish Magazines by her side. 'To business,') and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

How does Mitchell use Madame Crommelynck's name to develop her character?

- Student responses may include:
 - The first thing Madame Crommelynck says to Jason is a long, formal introduction. She says, "My name is Eva van Outryve de Crommelynck" (p. 144). Then, she tells Jason he may address her as "Madame Crommelynck" (p. 144). When people recommend that she go by a simpler, more English name like "Mrs. Crommelynck," because her full name is too "onions-and-béret," she tells them to "Go to the hell!" (p. 144). This suggests that she is proud of her name and her heritage.
 - When Jason pronounces Madame Crommelynck's name wrong, she corrects him and tells him which parts of the name to emphasize: "Crom-mel-ynck" (p. 144). This suggests that she is proud of her name. It also suggests that she is blunt and straightforward.

① Consider explaining to students that when words like *allons donc* (meaning "come on" or "let's go") appear in a text, they are italicized to show that they are non-English words.

- ① Consider directing students' attention to Jason's use of parentheses in examples such as "'Yes.' ('Poet!') 'Very pleased to meet you'" (p. 144). Explain that the narrator, Jason, uses parentheses in this way throughout the novel to reveal his thoughts or provide direct explanations to the reader.

Explain how Jason's poems are published in the parish magazine.

- 💬 Jason's poems are published in the *Black Swan Green Parish Magazine* because Madame Crommelynck delivers them. She says, "I deliver your poems to the real vicar in the real vicarage" (p. 145).

What does Madame Crommelynck's treatment of the poems reveal about her values and interests?

- 💬 Madame Crommelynck delivers the poems for free, and she does it "in darkness, anonymous" (p. 145). That she does this despite her "not-agile bones" (p. 145), suggests that Madame Crommelynck values good poetry and wants to help Jason even though nobody will recognize her for it. Also, she considers reading the poems as her form of payment, so it seems as if she enjoys Jason's poems.

When Madame Crommelynck says, "To business," what does she intend to do?

- 💬 When she says "To business" (p. 145), she means she wants to discuss Jason's poems with him. She taps the pile of *Black Swan Green Parish Magazines* by her side as she says this, and the magazines are where Jason's poems are published.

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 Mitchell introduce and develop the character of Madame Crommelynck in the opening of "Solarium"?

Instruct students to look at their annotations to find evidence. Ask students to use this lesson's vocabulary wherever possible in their written responses. Also, 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

5%

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to conduct a brief search to answer the following questions that will provide context for references in the following lesson's reading:

What is the Falklands War?

Who is T.S. Eliot?

Who is Simon Bolivar?

Also for homework, instruct students to read their AIR texts through the lens of a focus standard of their choice and prepare for a 3–5 minute discussion of their texts based on that standard.

Homework

Conduct a brief search to answer the following questions that will provide context for references in the next lesson's reading:

What is the Falklands War?

Who is T.S. Eliot?

Who is Simon Bolivar?

Continue to read your Accountable Independent Reading text through the lens of a focus standard of your choice and prepare for a 3–5 minute discussion of your text based on that standard.

Model Character Tracking Tool

Name:		Class:		Date:	
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Directions: Use this tool to keep track of character development throughout the module. Trace character development in the texts by noting how the author introduces and develops characters. Cite textual evidence to support your work.

Text:	<i>Black Swan Green</i> by David Mitchell
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Character	Trait	Evidence
Jason	aspiring poet	Jason is pleased that someone calls his poems work: “Nobody’s ever called Eliot Bolivar’s poems work” (p. 142). Jason is pleased that Madame Crommelynck considers him a poet. When writing about his introduction to Madame Crommelynck, Jason includes his thought “(‘Poet!’)” (p. 144), which indicates that he is pleased with the recognition.
Madame Crommelynck	old	Jason describes her as “old but grand” (p. 143). He also describes her as having “silver hair” (p. 143) and “bony fingers” (p. 144).
	blunt	On multiple occasions, she responds to people with the phrase “go to the hell” (pp. 144–145) when she disagrees with them.
	proud/ stubborn	When other people suggest that Madame Crommelynck use a simpler, English name, like Mrs. Crommelynck, she refuses. When people suggest that her full name is “onions-and-béret” (p. 144), she insists on being called Madame.
	values poetry	Madame Crommelynck delivers Jason’s poems to the vicar “in darkness, anonymous” (p. 145). She receives no recognition, and the only payment she receives is reading Jason’s poems before delivering them: “But in payment, I read your poems first” (p. 145).