

9.1.2

Lesson 9

Introduction

In this lesson, students read excerpts from two of Jason’s visits to the vicarage in pages 149–156 of “Solarium” from David Mitchell’s *Black Swan Green* (from “One moment we were watching the twitch of a squirrel’s heart” to “So believe me. Comprehensive schools are not so infernal”). During these visits, Jason and Madame Crommelynck continue their discussion about beauty, and also discuss why Jason writes under a pseudonym and why “Hangman” is his best poem. Students analyze how Mitchell refines the central idea of the meaning of beauty. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: How does the interaction between Jason and Madame Crommelynck refine a central idea?

For homework, students choose one of this lesson’s vocabulary words and then write an explanation of how the word connects to an important idea of the text.

Standards

Assessed Standard(s)	
RL.9-10.2	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
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)
<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 the interaction between Jason and Madame Crommelynck refine a central idea?
High Performance Response(s)
<p>A High Performance Response should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze how the interaction between Jason and Madame Crommelynck refines a central idea (e.g., The conversation Jason and Madame Crommelynck have about beauty refines the central idea of the meaning of beauty. Madame Crommelynck introduces what she calls “a greater mystery” (p. 155), the idea that “If an art is <i>true</i> ... [and] ... <i>free of falsenesses</i> ... it is ... beautiful” (p. 155). Previously in “Solarium,” Madame Crommelynck suggests that beauty cannot be created, and that Jason should be “truthful to the world” (p. 154), but the “greater mystery” (p. 155) is the first time she says truth makes art beautiful.).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> approximate (v.) – to simulate; imitate closely insatiable (adj.) – incapable of being satisfied or appeased inconsolable (adj.) – extremely sad and not able to be comforted aristocrat (n.) – person in a class holding exceptional rank and privileges, especially the hereditary nobility quotidian (adj.) – usual or customary; everyday a priori (adj.) – existing in the mind prior to and independent of experience
Vocabulary to teach (may include direct word work and/or questions)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pseudonym (n.) – a fictitious name used by an author quintessentially (adv.) – of the pure and essential essence of something
Additional vocabulary to support English Language Learners (to provide directly)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> gaze (v.) – to look at someone or something in a steady way and usually for a long time sobbing (adj.) – crying noisily while taking in short, sudden breaths

- hospitality (n.) – generous and friendly treatment of visitors and guests
- tailor (n.) – a person who makes men's clothes (such as suits and jackets) that are measured to fit a particular person
- craft (n.) – a job or activity that requires special skill

Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
Standards & Text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards: RL.9-10.2, RL.9-10.3, L.9-10.4.a • Text: <i>Black Swan Green</i> by David Mitchell, “Solarium,” pp. 149–156 	
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 Interactions Tool (refer to 9.1.2 Lesson 8)
- Student copies of the Central Ideas Tracking Tool (refer to 9.1.1 Lesson 5)—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 the assessed standards for this lesson: RL.9-10.2 and RL.9-10.3. In this lesson, students read excerpts of two of Jason’s visits to the vicarage and analyze how the author develops and refines central ideas. 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 student pairs to share and discuss their responses to the Character Interactions Tool they completed for homework (Reread pages 142–148 of “Solarium” from *Black Swan Green* (from “‘OPEN UP! OPEN UP!’ holler door knockers” to “‘My glass is empty.’ The last drops were the thickest”) and complete the Character Interactions Tool.).

- ▶ Student pairs share and discuss their Character Interactions Tools.
- 💬 See the Model Character Interactions Tool at the end of this lesson for sample student responses.

Activity 3: Masterful Reading

20%

Have students listen to a masterful reading of “Solarium” from *Black Swan Green* (from “One moment we were watching the twitch of a squirrel’s heart” to “‘So believe me. Comprehensive schools are not so infernal’” (pp. 149–156)). Instruct students to listen for the development of a new central idea.

- ❗ **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider posing the following focus question to guide students in their reading:

Which words and ideas are repeated in this excerpt? What do the characters say about these repeated words and ideas?

- ▶ Students follow along, reading silently.

Activity 4: Reading and Discussion

50%

Instruct students to form pairs. Post or project the questions below for students to discuss before sharing out with the class. Instruct students to continue to annotate the text as they read and discuss.

- ① Remind students that they should keep track of central ideas in the text using the Central Ideas Tracking Tool.

Provide students with the following definitions: *approximate* means “to simulate; imitate closely” and *insatiable* means “incapable of being satisfied or appeased.”

- 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 *approximate* and *insatiable* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the following definition: *gaze* means “to look at someone or something in a steady way and usually for a long time.”

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

Instruct student pairs to read pages 149–150 of “Solarium” (from “One moment we were watching the twitch of a squirrel’s heart” to “As far as Madame Crommelynck was concerned, I’d already left the solarium”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

How does Madame Crommelynck describe her experience of growing older? How does her description develop or refine a central idea?

☞ Student responses should include:

- Madame Crommelynck says, “human beauty falls leaf by leaf” (p. 150). This means that she lost her beauty gradually. She says that she is now a “*vieille sorcière*” (p. 150) who has to use makeup to try and imitate her former beauty.
- Madame Crommelynck develops the central idea of the nature of beauty introduced earlier in the chapter. Just as a potter’s vase is “only an object where beauty *resides*. Until the vase is dropped and breaks” (p. 148) Madame Crommelynck believes her face, like the vase, is a place where beauty once resided.

- ① Consider explaining to students that *vielle sorcière* is a French term that roughly means “old witch.”

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

How does Jason see Madame Crommelynck when he examines her closely?

Jason notices details about Madame Crommelynck's face that he has not examined before. He describes Madame Crommelynck's face as old and possibly scary looking. Jason calls Madame Crommelynck "an It" (p. 150), instead of a person or a woman. He says, "sags ruckused its eye bags," eyelashes "gummed into spikes," "[d]eltas of tiny red veins snaked its stained whites," "makeup dusted its mummified skin," and "it's gristly nose was subsiding into its skull hole" (p. 150).

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle to analyze Madame Crommelynck's description of aging, consider asking the following scaffolding question:

What is the meaning of Madame Crommelynck's statement "beauty falls leaf by leaf"? Consider what Madame Crommelynck describes in the rest of the paragraph.

"Beauty falls leaf by leaf" (p. 150) describes how the aging process causes people to lose their beauty so gradually that it's difficult to recognize. Madame Crommelynck compares beauty to the leaves of a tree which gradually fall off, leaving the tree bare. Madame Crommelynck says, "[y]ou miss the beginning" and then "day by day it falls" until one looks like an old witch (p. 150), meaning that the beginning of the loss of beauty, like the fall of the first leaf, is not noticeable, but that as time goes on and more leaves fall, beauty is gone.

How does Madame Crommelynck's statement, "eating the roots of beauty is a[n] ... [i]nsatiable, indestructible slug", develop a central idea?

In response to some people's claim that "[t]he old are *still* beautiful" (p. 150), Madame Crommelynck uses the reference to the slug to describe what happens to people's beauty as they age. The words "insatiable" and "indestructible" (p. 150) demonstrate there is no way to prevent aging and the loss of beauty. These descriptions refine the central idea of the meaning of beauty by demonstrating that human beauty is temporary, because age is always eating away at it, like the slug to which Madame Crommelynck refers.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Provide students with the following definition: *inconsolable* means "extremely sad and not able to be comforted."

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

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the following definitions: *sobbing* means “crying noisily while taking in short, sudden breaths” and *hospitality* means “generous and friendly treatment of visitors and guests.”

- ▶ Students write the definitions of *sobbing* and *hospitality* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

Instruct student pairs to read pages 151–153 (from “Druggy pom-pom bees hovered in the lavender” to “a stranger who hides behind a ridiculous pseudonym”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

How does Jason describe the music playing in the solarium? How does the music relate to Jason’s poetry?

☞ Student responses should include:

- Jason describes how the music moves Madame Crommelynck. He says she is listening “[a]s if the music was a warm bath” (p. 152). He also describes the music’s complexity. He says it is “[j]ealous *and* sweet,” “sobbing *and* gorgeous,” and “muddy *and* crystal” (p. 152).
- Jason believes that words could have the same impact as the music: “if the right words existed, the music wouldn’t need to” (p. 152).

What does Madame Crommelynck want Jason to tell her?

☞ Madame Crommelynck wants Jason to tell her his “true name” (p. 153).

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students are unable to define the word *pseudonym* from context on their own, consider asking the following scaffolding question:

Which details from the text provide clues about the meaning of the word *pseudonym*?

- ☞ Madame Crommelynck wants to learn Jason’s “true name” (p. 153). She says Jason “hides behind a ridiculous pseudonym” (p. 153). At this point in the story, Madame Crommelynck only knows the name Eliot Bolivar, which is not Jason’s real name, so *pseudonym* means “a fictitious name used by an author to publish.”
- 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.

Provide students with the following definitions: *aristocrat* means “person in a class holding exceptional rank and privileges, especially the hereditary nobility,” *quotidian* means “usual or customary; everyday,” and *a priori* means “existing in the mind prior to and independent of experience.”

- 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 *aristocrat*, *quotidian*, and *a priori* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the following definitions: *tailor* means “a person who makes men's clothes (such as suits and jackets) that are measured to fit a particular person” and *craft* means “a job or activity that requires special skill.”
- ▶ Students write the definitions of *tailor* and *craft* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

Instruct student pairs to read pages 153–156 (from “Hangman was even stopping me from saying ‘Sorry’” to “So believe me. Comprehensive schools are not so infernal”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

What is Madame Crommelynck’s opinion of Jason’s real name?

- 💬 Madame Crommelynck believes Jason is a great name that he should not hide. She says it is the name of a “Hellenic hero” (p. 153).

Why does Madame Crommelynck believe Jason uses a pseudonym?

- 💬 She believes Jason uses a pseudonym because his poetry is a “shameful secret” (p. 153) he doesn’t want people to know about.

Why does Jason say he writes under a pseudonym?

- 💬 Student responses may include:
 - Jason describes how other people might treat him if they knew he writes poetry. He says, “writing poetry’s ... sort of gay,” and “writing poems is ... what creeps and poofers do” (p. 153). This represents how Jason’s peers are not tolerant of certain people and how they might react to Jason’s poetry. Using a pseudonym protects Jason from being treated differently and poorly.
 - Jason describes how people with his background do not write poetry. He says poetry is something you can do “If you’re dad’s a famous composer and your mum’s an aristocrat” (p. 154). In contrast, he says poetry is something “you can’t do if your dad works at Greenland Supermarkets” (p. 154). Using a pseudonym allows Jason to write poetry without addressing the expectations of those around him.

- ① Consider discussing with students the slang use of “creeps” and “poofers” in this context.

When does Madame Crommelynck believe Jason starts “talking like a real poet”? Why?

💬 Student responses should include:

- Madame Crommelynck believes Jason is “talking like a real poet” (p. 154) when he explains why he cannot be open about writing poetry.
- Madame Crommelynck says that Jason is “talking like a real poet” because he tells the truth about something difficult (page 154).

① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle, consider asking the following scaffolding question:

Which details from the text provide context to define the term “quintessentially truthful”?

💬 Madame Crommelynck likes when Jason honestly says what happens to children who don’t fit in. She says he is “entirely of [his] words” (p. 154). Therefore, “quintessentially truthful” (p. 154) means telling the truth in a pure, or open way.

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

How does Jason and Madame Crommelynck’s discussion of a “double life” develop or refine a central idea?

💬 Student responses should include:

- Jason wants to seek approval of his peers, whom Madame Crommelynck refers to as “hairy barbarians” (p. 154). He also wants the approval of the “literary world” (p. 154). This is why he wants to have two identities. Madame Crommelynck believes Jason cannot have a double life and be an excellent artist. She says, “If you are not truthful to the world about who and what you are, your art will stink of falsenesses” (p. 154).
- This desire refines the idea of individual identity versus group identification because Jason wants to identify as an individual and as a member of the group, but he doesn’t believe he can accomplish both goals with only one identity.

How does Madame Crommelynck describe the relationship between poetry, truth, and beauty?

💬 Madame Crommelynck tells Jason that great poetry is truth. She tells him that Dawn Madden will treasure his poetry if it is “beauty and *truth*” (p. 155), instead of simple, romantic writing. She also says that poets should “throw all but truth in the cellar” (p. 155), which means that poets should only write truth. Further, she explains that there is truth everywhere, so poets can write true and beautiful poetry about many subjects or ideas.

How does the “greater mystery” (p. 155) relate to Jason and Madame Crommelynck’s discussion from their previous meeting?

- ☛ The “greater mystery” (p. 155) to which Madame Crommelynck refers is her statement that, “[i]f an art is true ... it is ... beautiful” (p. 155). This relates to the prior week’s discussion in which Jason and Madame Crommelynck agreed that people cannot define beauty. The two discussions together show that it is impossible to define beauty, but it is possible to recognize beauty in art if the art is true.

How does Madame Crommelynck’s assessment of the “Hangman” poem develop or refine a central idea?

- ☛ Madame Crommelynck believes “Hangman” is Jason’s best poem because it contains truth about his speech impediment on page 156: “It has pieces of truth of your speech impediment.” This evaluation of the poem refines the central idea of the meaning of beauty by establishing that the poem is beautiful because it is truthful.

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 the interaction between Jason and Madame Crommelynck refine a central idea?

Instruct students to look at their annotations to find evidence. Ask students to use this lesson’s vocabulary wherever possible in their written responses. 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 homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to select one of this lesson’s vocabulary words and explain how that word connects to an important idea in the text.

Students should write a paragraph explaining the word selected and how it connects to an important idea in the text.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider suggesting the following words for students to consider: *approximate, insatiable, inconsolable, aristocrat, quotidian, a priori, pseudonym, or quintessentially.*

- ▶ Students follow along.

Homework

Select a vocabulary word from today's lesson that you think is important to expressing an important idea in the text. Write a paragraph in which you explain the word you selected and how it connects to an important idea in the text.

Model Character Interactions Tool

Name:		Class:		Date:	
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Directions: Use this tool to track the interactions between Jason and Madame Crommelynck about Jason's poetry.

Praise from Madame	Criticism from Madame	Jason's Thoughts/Reactions
<p>"your poem is robust enough to <i>be</i> criticized" (p. 146)</p> <p>"Your imagery is here, there, fresh," (p. 146)</p> <p>"What is more <i>poetic</i> than 'Jason'" (p. 153)</p> <p>"Now you are talking like a real poet" (p. 154)</p> <p>"Your best poem in here ... it has pieces of truth" (p. 156)</p>	<p>"Why is this title so atrocious?" (p. 146)</p> <p>"Beautiful words ruin your poetry" (p. 147)</p> <p>"your 'sort of' is annoying" (p. 147).</p> <p>"In clothes, in cuisine, the English have an irresistible urge to self-mutilation" (p. 152)</p> <p>"stranger who hides behind a ridiculous pseudonym" (p. 153)</p>	<p>"I felt giddy with importance that <i>my</i> words'd captured the attention of this exotic woman." (p. 145)</p> <p>"My legs'd got pins and needles" (p. 150)</p> <p>"(She's a pain sometimes.)" (p. 154)</p>

Model Central Ideas Tracking Tool

Name:		Class:		Date:	
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Directions: Identify the central ideas that you encounter throughout the text. Trace the development of those ideas by noting how the author introduces, develops, or refines these ideas in the texts. Cite textual evidence to support your work.

Text:	<i>Black Swan Green</i> by David Mitchell
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Page / Paragraph #	Central Ideas	Notes and Connections
Pages 153–154	Individual identity versus group identification: Individuals struggle between fitting into a group and developing their personal identity	Madame Crommelynck questions Jason about his use of a pseudonym. Jason explains that poetry is something one cannot do if “your dad works at Greenland Supermarkets and if you go to a comprehensive school” (p. 154). This illustrates the conflict between Jason’s individual identity and the expectations of those around him.
Pages 154–155	Meaning of beauty: Truth is beautiful	Madame Crommelynck tells Jason, “True poetry is truth” and “if an art is <i>true</i> ... it is ... beautiful” (p. 155). She also tells him that “Hangman” is his best poem because it includes truth about his speech impediment.