

**11.1.1****Lesson 4****Introduction**

In this lesson, students read and analyze lines 34–43 from “My Last Duchess” (from “Who’d stoop to blame / This sort of trifling?” to “E’en then there would be some stooping, and I choose / Never to stoop”), in which the Duke states that he never “stooped” to blame the Duchess for her actions. For the lesson assessment, students review their Quick Writes from Lesson 2 about how Browning begins to develop the Duke at the beginning of the poem before writing a new response about how Browning continues to develop the Duke. After the assessment, students discuss the significance and relevance of the evidence they cited in their responses, in relation to W.11-12.b and W.11-12.5, both new standards introduced in this lesson.

For homework, students begin reading their AIR text through the lens of focus standard RL.11-12.1.

**Standards**

Assessed Standard(s)	
RL.11-12.3	Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
W.11-12.2.b	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.  b. Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience’s knowledge of the topic.
Addressed Standard(s)	
W.11-12.5	Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

## Assessment

Assessment(s)
<p>Student learning will be assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson. Students answer the following prompt, citing textual evidence to support analysis and inferences drawn from the text.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reread your response to the Lesson 2 Quick Write before responding to the following prompt: How does Browning further develop the character of the Duke in lines 34–43?</li> </ul>
High Performance Response(s)
<p>A High Performance Response should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cite evidence from lines 34–43 to support analysis of the Duke’s character.</li> <li>Identify an insight about the Duke’s character beyond what was stated in the Lesson 2 Quick Write response.</li> </ul>

## Vocabulary

Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>trifling (n.) – idle or frivolous conduct, talk, etc.</li> <li>forsooth (adv.) – in truth; in fact; indeed</li> </ul>
Vocabulary to teach (may include direct word work and/or questions)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lessoned (v.) – taught; instructed; given a lesson; admonished; reprovved</li> </ul>

## Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
<p><b>Standards &amp; Text:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standards: RL.11-12.3, W.11-12.2.b, W.11-12.5</li> <li>Text: “My Last Duchess,” lines 34–43</li> </ul> <p><b>Learning Sequence:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduction of Lesson Agenda</li> <li>Homework Accountability</li> <li>Masterful Reading</li> <li>Lines 34–43 Reading and Discussion</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10%</li> <li>10%</li> <li>5%</li> <li>50%</li> </ol>

5. Quick Write	5. 10%
6. Significant and Relevant Evidence Discussion	6. 10%
7. Closing	7. 5%

## Materials

- Student copies of the 11.1 Common Core Learning Standards Tool (refer to 11.1.1 Lesson 1)
- (Optional) free audio resource of “My Last Duchess”:  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/robert-browning-my-last-ducess-audio/11434.html> or  
<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/features/audioitem/138>
- Student copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist (refer to 11.1.1 Lesson 1)
- Student Quick Write responses from Lesson 2 (refer to 11.1.1 Lesson 2)

## Learning Sequence

How to Use the Learning Sequence	
Symbol	Type of Text & Interpretation of the Symbol
<b>10%</b>	<b>Percentage indicates the percentage of lesson time each activity should take.</b>
no symbol	Plain text indicates teacher action.
	<b>Bold text indicates text dependent questions.</b>
	<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: RL.11-12.3 and W.11-12.2.b. Inform students that they will be working in pairs or small groups as they read and discuss the text excerpt. Then they will independently respond to a writing prompt about how Browning is developing the Duke over the course of the poem.

- Students look at the agenda.

Explain to students that in this lesson they will begin working with two new standards: W.11-12.2.b and W.11-12.5. Ask students to individually reread standards W.11-12.2.b and W.11-12.5 and assess their

familiarity with and mastery of the standards on their Unit 11.1 Common Core Learning Standards Tool (10.1.1 Lesson 1).

- ▶ Students read and reflect on standards W.11-12.2.b and W.11-12.5.

Instruct students to talk in pairs about what they think standard W.11-12.2.b means. Lead a brief discussion about this standard. Remind students to pay attention to the overarching standard W.11-12.2 as well as W.11-12.2.b.

💬 Student responses may include the following:

- Write texts that inform or clearly explain ideas
- Organize ideas
- Analyze the topic
- Use strong details, definitions, or quotes from the text to support ideas and analysis
- Make choices about what evidence most clearly or accurately supports ideas and analysis

Instruct students to talk in pairs about what they think standard W.11-12.5 means. Lead a brief discussion about this standard.

💬 Student responses may include the following:

- Revise writing to meet the needs of a specific purpose or audience
- Revise and editing writing to make it better
- Plan before beginning to write

## Activity 2: Homework Accountability

**10%**

Instruct students to volunteer their responses to the homework from Lesson 3: What do you learn about the characters of the Duke and the Duchess in lines 29–34? What is left uncertain about the Duke and Duchess in these lines?

- ▶ Students volunteer their responses to the Lesson 3 homework.

💬 Student responses may include:

- We learn more about the Duchess than we do about the Duke. The Duke's description shows that the Duchess was friendly and courteous to all men—"all and each / Would draw from her the same approving speech" (lines 29–30)—and that she was easily pleased and impressed: "she liked whate'er / She looked upon" (lines 23–24). It is also hinted in these lines that she may have been unfaithful to the Duke, who comments that "her looks went everywhere" (line 24).

- Although the lines appear to describe the Duchess, we learn more about the Duke than we do about the Duchess. We learn about the Duke's pride: he is unable to bear the idea that "my favour at her breast" (line 25) and "a nine-hundred-years-old name" (line 33) are not ranked above all other gifts. We also see hints of his jealous nature in the line "her looks went everywhere" (line 24), where he suggests that she may have been unfaithful to him. These traits begin to suggest that the Duke may be an unreliable narrator as his pride and jealousy affect his description of the Duchess. The Duke also controls the story—he alone speaks, and the Duchess cannot, meaning that we are only offered one point of view.

Check to ensure all students have selected an AIR text.

### Activity 3: Masterful Reading

**5%**

Have students listen to a masterful reading of "My Last Duchess," lines 34–43, focusing on how Browning develops the Duke's character.

- ① Students have listened to a Masterful Reading of the entire poem at the beginning of Lessons 1–3. If students need another Masterful Reading of the entire poem, consider varying the delivery by using an audio source.
  - ▶ Students follow along, reading silently.

### Activity 4: Lines 34–43 Reading and Discussion

**50%**

Transition students to individually rereading lines 34–43 of "My Last Duchess," from "Who'd stoop to blame / This sort of trifling?" to "E'en then there would be some stooping, and I choose / Never to stoop." Direct students to three unfamiliar words: "*trifling*" (line 35), "*lessoned*" (line 40), and "*forsooth*" (line 41). Provide the definitions of *trifling* and *forsooth* and ask students to annotate their copy of the poem with these meanings. Explain that students will use context to define "*lessoned*" later in their reading.

- ▶ Students annotate their texts with the meanings of "trifling" and "forsooth."

Direct students to form pairs or groups to reread lines 31–35 (from "She thanked men – good! but thanked / Somehow" to "Who'd stoop to blame / This sort of trifling?") and answer the questions that follow:

**Consider the definition of trifling. To what "trifling" (line 35) is the Duke referring?**

- The Duke is referring to the Duchess's interactions with other men and to the fact that she thanked them all equally for favours, as though the Duke's gift of name and status were no more important than they were.

**How does the Duke describe his response to the Duchess's "trifling" (lines 34–35)?**

- The Duke says that he does not "stoop" to blame the Duchess's trifling.

**What does it mean to *stoop*? What does the word mean in this context?**

- *Stooping* means to lower oneself. To *stoop* would mean the Duke would have to go down to the Duchess's level to blame her.

① Encourage students to understand that both literal and figurative interpretations of the word *stoop* apply.

**What does the word "stoop" suggest about how the Duke views the Duchess?**

- This word choice suggests the Duke views himself as higher than, or superior to, the Duchess in this situation.

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Instruct pairs or groups to reread lines 35–39, from "Even had you skill / In speech—(which I have not)" to "here you miss, / Or there exceed the mark," and answer the questions that follow:

**What does the Duke say about his own speaking ability?**

- The Duke says he does not have "skill / In speech" (lines 35–36).

**What does the language of the poem suggest about the Duke's speaking ability? What specific details and examples illustrate this?**

- Student responses may include:
  - The language of the poem suggests the Duke is an eloquent speaker. For example, he says, "never read / Strangers like you that pictured countenance" (lines 6–7) and "My favour at her breast, / The dropping of the daylight in the West" (lines 25–26).
  - The language of the poem suggests the Duke has skill in speech. For example, he says, "Paint / Must never hope to reproduce the faint / Half-flush that dies along her throat" and "they would ask me, if they durst, / How such a glance came there" (lines 17–19).

**What inference can you make about the Duke based on what he says about his speaking ability?**

- Student responses may include:

- The Duke says he is not a good speaker to draw attention to the fact that he really is a good speaker.
- The Duke presents himself as a simple man with little skill for human interactions, but he really is manipulative.

**To whom does the Duke refer as “such an one” on line 37?**

💬 “Such an one” refers to the Duchess.

**Paraphrase lines 35–39, from “Even if you had skill / In speech” to “here you miss / Or there exceed the mark.”**

💬 Even if I could tell the Duchess, “This thing upsets me” or “Here’s what you do right, and here’s what you do wrong...”

**What is the meaning of the word “will” on line 36?**

💬 “Will” in this context means wishes or desires.

**To whose will is the Duke referring? How do you know?**

💬 The Duke is referring to his own will. When the Duke says “your will,” he is describing a hypothetical situation.

**What is the Duke’s will? How does this contribute to the Duke’s development as a character?**

💬 The Duke’s will is to tell the Duchess what disgusts him about her and what she does that pleases or disappoints him. This further develops the idea that the Duke wants to control the Duchess.

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Instruct pairs or groups to reread lines 39–43, from “—and if she let / Herself be lessoned so” to “and I choose / Never to stoop,” and answer the questions that follow. Share with students that “nor plainly set / Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse” means “stopped arguing and making excuses.”

**What is the meaning of “lessoned” as Browning uses it on line 40?**

💬 Lessoned contains the word “lesson.” The Duke is describing his will to correct the Duchess, so he wants to teach her a lesson. In this case, lessoned means corrected or reprimanded.

① Consider drawing students’ attention to their application of standard L.11-12.4.a, b through the process of using context and word parts to make meaning of a word.

**What is the impact of specific words or phrases in the Duke’s statement, “I choose / Never to stoop” in lines 42–43?**

🗨 Student responses may include:

- “Never” is a strong word that shows how committed the Duke is not to stoop to blame the Duchess.
- Through the use of the word “stoop,” the Duke emphasizes that he is higher than, or superior to, the Duchess.
- The Duke’s use of “I choose” shows that he is in control of the situation; he is the one making decisions.

**How does the Duke’s repeated use of the word “stoop” contribute to his development as a character?**

🗨 Student responses may include:

- The Duke’s choice to repeat the word “stoop” signifies that he believes he would have to lower himself to address the Duchess and her actions. By repeating the word stoop, the Duke reinforces that he views himself as different from, and superior to, the Duchess.

## Activity 5: Quick Write

**10%**

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

**Reread your response to the 11.1.1 Lesson 2 Quick Write before responding to this prompt: How does Browning further develop the character of the Duke in lines 34–43?**

Remind students to focus on finding the most significant and relevant details (W.11-12.b) and to support their analysis with new evidence from lines 34–43. Encourage students to use the Short Response Checklist and Rubric to guide their writing.

- ▶ Students listen and read the Quick Write prompt.

① Display the prompt for students to see, or provide the prompt in hard copy. Ensure all students have access to their Quick Writes from Lesson 2.

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 6: Significant and Relevant Evidence Discussion

**10%**

Instruct students to share their Quick Write responses in small groups and discuss which evidence most effectively demonstrates the development of the Duke's character.

- ▶ Students discuss the evidence each group member used in the Quick Write, considering which evidence is most effective.

Ask each group to share out the evidence they identified as the most significant and relevant, based on how effectively the evidence demonstrated the development of the Duke's character.

- ▶ Each group shares out the evidence they identified as being the most significant and relevant.

## Activity 7: Closing

**5%**

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, students read their Accountable Independent Reading (AIR) text through the lens of a focus standard. Introduce standard RL.11-12.1 as the focus standard and model what applying a focus standard looks like.

For example, RL.11-12.1 asks students to "Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain." Students who read "My Last Duchess" might say, "In lines 21–22, the Duke describes the Duchess by saying, 'She had / A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad.' This contributes to Browning's development of the Duke as a character who wants to assert his control over the Duchess."

Instruct students that they should prepare for a brief 3–5 minute discussion that will ask them to apply the language of the standards to their reading.

- ▶ Students follow along.

## Homework

Begin reading your AIR text through the lens of the assigned focus standard (RL.11-12.1) and prepare for a 3–5 minute discussion of your text based on that standard.