

**11.1.1****Lesson 5****Introduction**

In this lesson, students read the final 14 lines of “My Last Duchess” (from “Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt / Whene’er I passed her” to “Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me”). Students read and analyze a new standard, RL.11-12.2, before examining how Browning develops central ideas such as power and status, control, jealousy, and voice in these lines. After listening to a Masterful Reading of the poem, students review the literal and figurative meanings of the lines and then participate in small-group discussions to explore central ideas. Students demonstrate their learning in a Quick Write at the end of the lesson. For homework, students consider how Browning uses one of the Duke’s art pieces to develop the Duke’s character. The study of central ideas in the poem broadens students’ engagement with the Duke’s character, in preparation for the End-of-Unit Assessment in Lesson 6.

**Standards**

Assessed Standard(s)	
RL.11-12.2	Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.
RL.11-12.6	Analyze a case in which grasping point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in the text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).
Addressed 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).

**Assessment**

Assessment(s)
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.

- What is the impact of Browning's choice of speaker on the development of central ideas in the poem?

### High Performance Response(s)

A High Performance Response should:

- Identify that the Duke is the speaker of the poem.
- Explain how the Duke's point of view (including his unreliability) develops central ideas in the poem (e.g., power and status, voice, materialism, jealousy, madness).

## Vocabulary

### Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)

- munificence (n.) – the quality of being munificent or showing unusual generosity
- ample (adj.) – fully sufficient or more than adequate for the purpose or needs; plentiful; enough
- warrant (n.) – something that serves to give reliable or formal assurance of something; guarantee, pledge, or security
- just (adj.) – guided by truth, reason, justice, and fairness
- pretence (n.) – a claim made or implied
- dowry (n.) – the money, goods, or estate that a wife brings to her husband at marriage

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

- object (n.) – the end to which effort or action is directed; goal; purpose

## Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
<b>Standards &amp; Text:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standards: RL.11-12.2, RL.11-12.6, RL.11-12.3</li> <li>• Text: "My Last Duchess," lines 43–56</li> </ul>	
<b>Learning Sequence:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda</li> <li>2. Homework Accountability</li> <li>3. Masterful Reading</li> <li>4. Lines 43–56 Reading and Discussion</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 10%</li> <li>2. 10%</li> <li>3. 5%</li> <li>4. 55%</li> </ol>

5. Quick Write	5. 15%
6. Closing	6. 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)

## 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.
	<b>Bold text indicates questions for the teacher to ask students.</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.11-12.2 and RL.11-12.6. Explain to students that in this lesson they will consider how Browning introduces and develops a central idea in the poem.

- Students look at the agenda.

Explain that students will begin working on a new standard: RL.11-12.2. Instruct students to reread standard RL.11-12.2 individually and assess their familiarity with and mastery of the standard on their 11.1 Common Core Learning Standards Tool.

- Students read and reflect on standard RL.11-12.2.

Instruct students to talk with a partner about their understanding of the new standard, RL.11-12.2.

- ▶ Students work in pairs to explain the standard.

🗨 Student responses may include:

- This standard means that students must determine and analyze more than one central idea in a text.
- This standard means that authors develop central ideas in several places in a text.
- One central idea can affect other central ideas in a text.
- Students must be able to summarize a text objectively.

Lead a brief class discussion about the meaning of the standard to check for understanding.

Ask students to clarify the meaning of the term “central idea” to check for understanding.

🗨 Student responses might include:

- An idea that is important to the text
- A big idea in a text
- A theme
- An idea that is repeated several times

Remind students that, as they read in this lesson, they will be working with this standard so they should be looking for central ideas, paying attention to words or passages that require them to define or clarify language in the poem, and annotating the text to prepare for textual analysis.

① In Lesson 3, students may have begun to informally identify emerging central ideas, including jealousy, possessiveness, power and status, voice, etc. If so, remind students to note the continued development of these ideas, and the emergence of new ideas in the text.

## Activity 2: Homework Accountability

**10%**

Instruct students to talk in pairs about how they applied their focus standard, RL.11-12.1, to their AIR text. Then, lead a brief share out by selecting several students (or student pairs) to explain how they applied their focus standard to their AIR text.

- ▶ Students (or student pairs) discuss and share how they applied their focus standard (RL.11-12.1) to their AIR text from the previous lesson’s homework.

### Activity 3: Masterful Reading

5%

Have students listen to a Masterful Reading of Robert Browning’s “My Last Duchess,” lines 43–56, and remind students that they will be working with standard RL.11-12.2. Instruct students to pay attention to how the Duke reports what happened to the Duchess.

- ▶ Students follow along, reading silently.

### Activity 4: Lines 43–56 Reading and Discussion

55%

Instruct students to reread lines 43–47 (from “Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt, / Whene’er I passed her” to “Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands / As if alive”) before working in pairs to respond to the following questions. Instruct students to write central ideas they notice in the margin of the text. Direct students to mark those places related to a central idea in the poem with the code “CI” (Central Idea).

Remind students this will help them keep track of evidence they will be using later in the lesson assessment as well as the 11.1 Performance Assessment, which will focus on the development of central ideas in several texts.

**What does the Duke mean by the question, “who passed without / Much the same smile?” in lines 44–45?**

- 💬 The Duchess smiled at other people just as she smiled at the Duke.

**What does the Duke mean by “This grew” in line 45?**

- 💬 The Duchess kept smiling at everyone.

**What might the Duke mean when he states, “I gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together” in lines 45–46?**

- 💬 The Duke might have had the Duchess killed, silenced in some way, or sent away.
- ① Student responses will vary because Browning does not specify what the orders were. Draw students’ attention to their application of RL.11-12.1 as they consider where the text leaves matters uncertain.

**How does the repetition of the phrase “as if alive” in lines 2 and 47 impact the poem?**

- 💬 Student responses might include:
  - It reminds readers that the Duchess is no longer there and that the Duke might have killed her.

- It makes it seem as though the Duke is more pleased with the picture of the Duchess. The portrait “as if alive” is better than the living Duchess.
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Instruct students to form new pairs before rereading lines 47–53 (from “Will’t please you rise? We’ll meet / The company below, then” to “as I avowed / At starting, is my object”) and answering the following question. Remind students to continue to annotate for central ideas, using the code CI.

**What action happens in lines 47–48, right after the Duke finishes talking about the Duchess and her picture?**

- The Duke and the listener go downstairs.
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Instruct students to record the meanings of the following words from lines 49–51: *munificence* (the quality of being munificent or showing unusual generosity), *warrant* (something that serves to give reliable or formal assurance of something; guarantee, pledge or security), *just* (guided by truth, reason, justice and fairness), *pretence* (a claim made or implied), *dowry* (the money, goods or estate that a wife brings to her husband at marriage).

Instruct students to reread lines 49–56 (from “The Count your master’s known munificence / Is ample warrant” to “Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me”) and then Turn-and-Talk in pairs to answer the following questions.

- ▶ Students read silently and then talk in pairs to answer the following questions.

**What are the Duke and the listener discussing in lines 49–53?**

- The Duke’s plans to marry the Count’s daughter.

**What is the connection between the Count’s “known munificence” and a dowry in lines 49–51 (“The Count your master’s known munificence” to “no just pretence / Of mine for dowry will be disallowed”)?**

- Because the Count is known for his generosity, the Duke is sure that he can get a big dowry.

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle, consider posing the following question as a scaffold:

**To whose munificence does the Duke refer in line 49?**

- The Duke refers to the Count’s munificence.

- ① If necessary, provide a short definition of *ample* (enough).

- ① Some students may notice the British spelling, *pretence*. Explain that, in British spelling, *c* is sometimes used instead of the *s* used in American spelling.

**What does the word *object* mean in line 53?**

- 💬 *Object* here means *goal* or *desire*.

**What other meaning does the word *object* have?**

- 💬 It can mean *thing*.

**What is the impact of Browning's choice to use the word *object* in this line?**

- 💬 It reminds readers that the Duke seems to care more about things than people.
- 💬 It suggests that his next wife will be another object (thing) for him.

**What does the Duke ask the listener to “notice” as they go downstairs?**

- 💬 The Duke wants the listener to notice a bronze sculpture of Neptune taming a sea horse.

- ① Students will consider the significance of this imagery later in the homework assignment.
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Instruct students to review their annotations for lines 43–56, and share in pairs the central ideas and supporting evidence they identified in these lines.

- ▶ Student pairs share about the development of central ideas in lines 43–56.
- 💬 Student responses may include the following:
- Jealousy: The Duke is jealous because the Duchess gave the “same smile” to everyone (line 45).
  - Control/Power: The Duke “gave commands” that caused the Duchess’ smiles to stop (lines 45–46). The Duke directs the listener when it is time to go downstairs (lines 47–48).
  - Objectification/Control: The Duke seems happier with the picture of the Duchess where “she stands / as if alive” than with the living Duchess (lines 46–47). The Duke refers to the Count’s daughter as his “object” (line 53).
  - Madness: The Duke might have had the Duchess killed because of his obsessive jealousy.
  - Materialism/Power and Status: The Duke is negotiating for a dowry and says the Count’s generosity means that “no just pretence” of the Duke for dowry will be “disallowed” (lines 49–51). The Duke refers to the Count’s daughter as his “object,” and the Duke ends the conversation by showing off the bronze statue, another of his objects (lines 49–51, 53, 54–56).

Lead a share out of responses. Instruct students to note central ideas identified by their classmates, for possible use in the Quick Write.

- ① To build upon these and other central ideas they may have identified in Lesson 3, if time permits, consider a Masterful Reading of the entire poem to give students the opportunity to reflect on the development of central ideas over the course of the text.
- ① The ideas of voice and power, and the relationship between them, will be important in students' study of *Hamlet* and the excerpt from Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*. If students raise the issue of the Duchess's silence and powerlessness in relation to the Duke's power and "skill in speech," consider offering students the term "voice" as a tool for discussing the relationship between self-expression and power.

### Activity 5: Quick Write

**15%**

Instruct students to prepare for the Quick Write assessment by reviewing annotations and notes from today's lesson and earlier lessons in order to gather text evidence to support their responses. Remind students to review the criteria on the Short Response Rubric and Checklist.

Instruct students to respond in writing to the following prompt:

**What is the impact of Browning's choice of speaker on the development of central ideas in the poem?**

- ▶ Students listen and read the Quick Write prompt.
- ① Display the prompt for students to see, or provide the prompt in hard copy.
- ① Depending upon students' level of engagement with central ideas prior to this lesson, consider explaining to students that they may focus their analysis on lines 4–56 or on the poem as a whole.

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: Closing

**5%**

Display and distribute the homework assignment. Instruct students to write a brief response explaining why the bronze statue described in lines 54–56 is important to the Duke.

In addition, instruct students to prepare for the End-of-Unit Assessment by reviewing the poem and any notes or annotations related to the Duke's character.



Also, students should continue their AIR through the lens of their focus standard (RL.11-12.1) and prepare for a 3–5 minute discussion of their text based on that standard.

- ▶ Students follow along.

## Homework

Write a brief response to the following prompt:

### **Why is the bronze statue described in lines 54–56 important to the Duke?**

Review and expand your annotations about how Browning introduces and develops the poem’s narrator (and main character), the Duke.

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