

11.1.2**Lesson 2****Introduction**

In this lesson, students encounter the character of Hamlet for the first time through the eyes of his uncle and now stepfather, Claudius, who reproaches Hamlet for his continued grief over the death of his father (*Hamlet*, Act 1.2, lines 90–110, from “’Tis sweet and commendable in your nature” to “till he that died today / This must be so”). Following a Masterful Reading of the first part of the monologue, students continue to work with standards RL.11-12.3 and RL.11-12.4 by engaging in a discussion about how Claudius introduces and develops Hamlet. Specifically they address the impact of Claudius’s word choices and the manner in which Shakespeare introduces the reader to Hamlet as a character through Claudius’s accusations of excessive and unmanly grief. Through this reading, students acquire a preliminary understanding of the characters of Claudius and Hamlet through their communication with each other. At the same time, they begin to determine the emergence of concepts such as gender roles, duty, and mortality.

Student learning in this lesson is assessed via a Quick Write that asks them to analyze the impact of Claudius’s word choices on the development of Hamlet’s character. For homework, students continue with their Accountable Independent Reading (AIR) through the lens of a new focus standard (RL.11-12.2 or RI.11-12.2) and consider in writing the standards to which Claudius is holding Hamlet.

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).
RL.11-12.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

Addressed Standard(s)	
L.11-12.4.b, c	<p>Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on <i>grades 11–12 reading and content</i>, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.</p> <p>b. Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., <i>conceive, conception, conceivable</i>).</p> <p>c. Consult general or specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, its etymology, or its standard usage.</p>

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"> How do specific word choices in Claudius's monologue impact the development of Hamlet's character?
High Performance Response(s)
<p>A High Performance Response should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine aspects of Hamlet's character that emerge from this monologue, such as a tendency towards excessive emotion, weakness, childishness, and unreasonableness. Identify specific word choices that develop these aspects of Hamlet's character, as viewed by Claudius.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> filial (adj.) – of, pertaining to, or befitting a son or daughter obsequious (adj.) – (in the Elizabethan context) obedient; dutiful obstinate (adj.) – firmly or stubbornly adhering to one's purpose, opinion impious (adj.) – not pious or religious; lacking reverence for God, religious practices, etc.
Vocabulary to teach (may include direct word work and/or text-dependent questions)

- condolence (n.) – sorrow
- vulgar (adj.) – characterized by ignorance of or lack of good breeding or taste; indecent; obscene; lewd; crude, coarse, unrefined; of, pertaining to, or constituting the ordinary people in a society; current, popular, common

Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
Standards & Text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards: RL.11-12.3, RL.11-12.4; L.11-12.4.b, c Text: <i>Hamlet</i>, Act 1.2, Lines 90–110 	
Learning Sequence: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of Lesson Agenda Homework Accountability Masterful Reading <i>Hamlet</i>, Act 1.2, Lines 90–110 Reading and Discussion Quick Write Closing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5% 10% 5% 60% 10% 10%

Materials

- 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.
	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 standards for this lesson: RL.11-12.3 and RL.11-12.4. In this lesson, students discuss Claudius's first monologue, through which readers are introduced to the character of Hamlet. They will determine how Claudius uses language to convey his point of view and how this use of language develops our first impressions of Hamlet.

- ▶ Students look at the agenda.

Activity 2: Homework Accountability

10%

Instruct students to work in pairs and to share their objective summaries of the opening scene, comparing which aspects they chose to emphasize and which vocabulary words they use.

- ▶ Student pairs share their objective summaries.

① Student summaries should cover the entirety of the first scene (lines 1–190).

Lead a class share out of objective summaries. Select several students to share their summaries.

💬 Student responses may include the following:

- Francisco, Barnardo, and Marcellus are guards watching the palace of the Danish King.
- Marcellus and Barnardo relieve Francisco, along with Horatio.
- Marcellus and Barnardo have asked Horatio to come with them.
- They want him to see what they have seen, an apparition in the form of Hamlet's recently deceased father.
- Horatio does not believe them: He thinks that the Ghost is a fantasy.
- The Ghost appears, and all three are very frightened: Horatio is harrowed by fear.
- Horatio, who is a scholar, speaks to the Ghost, demanding to know who or what he is that usurps the night.
- The Ghost stalks off, offended.
- Horatio agrees with Marcellus and Barnardo that the Ghost is real, and that it looks like the late King of Denmark, Hamlet's father.
- Horatio thinks that it means something bad is going to happen in Denmark (where the play is set).
- They discuss the war that is brewing due to the actions of Fortinbras of Norway.
- The Ghost reappears, but disappears again when the cock crows.
- Marcellus, Barnardo, and Horatio are unable to stop or speak to the Ghost.
- They decide to tell Hamlet, son of the late King, who is friends with Horatio, about the Ghost, because they believe that it will speak to him.

Activity 3: Masterful Reading**5%**

Transition students to a Masterful Reading of lines 90–110 (from “’Tis sweet and commendable in your nature” to “till he that died today / This must be so”). Instruct students to pay attention to Claudius’s choice of words.

- ▶ Students follow along, reading silently.

Activity 4: *Hamlet*, Act 1.2, Lines 90–110 Reading and Discussion**60%**

Remind students of their reading of Browning’s “My Last Duchess,” a poem written in the form of a dramatic monologue, in Unit 1. Explain to students that in addition to dialogues (such as the one students read in 11.1.2 Lesson 1), the play *Hamlet* includes dramatic monologues, one of which they will begin to explore in this lesson.

Direct students to form small groups. Instruct students to read lines 90–93 (from “’Tis sweet and commendable in your nature” to “But you must know your father lost a father”) and discuss the following questions in their groups, taking notes as they do so.

In lines 90–92, who is Hamlet mourning?

- 💬 Hamlet is mourning his father.

What are the first two adjectives that the King uses to describe Hamlet’s nature?

- 💬 He uses the adjectives “sweet” and “commendable.”

Evaluate Claudius’s sincerity about Hamlet’s “sweet and commendable” nature. What evidence from the text supports your position?

- 💬 Claudius is not sincere. We can see this in his use of the word “but” at the beginning of line 93, which indicates a shift to the main purpose of his speech, criticizing Hamlet.

Draw students’ attention to the phrases “bound in filial obligation” and “obsequious sorrow.”

Explain to students that *filial* means “of, pertaining to, or befitting a son or daughter” and that in this context, *obsequious* means “obedient; dutiful.”

Instruct students to read lines 93–96 (from “But you must know your father lost a father” to “for some term / to do obsequious sorrow” and answer the following questions, taking notes as they do so.

How does Claudius view the loss of Hamlet’s father? Use evidence from the text to support your position.

- ☞ Claudius views the death of Hamlet’s father as natural and inevitable. He points out that Hamlet’s father and his father before him lost their fathers.

How does Claudius emphasize his point in lines 93–94?

- ☞ Claudius emphasizes that everybody loses his/her father through the repetition of the words “lost” and “father.”

Explain to students that the word *impious* means “not pious or religious; lacking reverence for God, religious practices, etc.” and that *obstinate* means “stubborn.”

Instruct students to read lines 96–101 (from “But to persevere / In obstinate condolment is a course” to “a mind impatient / An understanding simple and unschooled”) and answer the following questions, taking notes as they do so.

Which familiar word do you see in *condolment*?

- ☞ Condole/condolences.

What does it mean to send condolences?

- ☞ It means to send sympathy for someone’s grief.

What does Claudius mean by *condolment* on line 97?

- ☞ *Condolment* means sorrow.

① Consider drawing students’ attention to their application of standard L.11-12.4.b through the process of determining word meaning through word parts.

Using these definitions, paraphrase lines 93–98. What is Claudius saying to Hamlet?

- ☞ Claudius is saying that everyone loses his or her father, and that he or she must mourn for him, but that to carry on grieving for too long is stubborn and inappropriate.

Define the word “grief” (line 98).

- ☞ Grief is an emotion or feeling of sadness.

What idea links the phrases “mourning duties” (line 92), “filial obligation” (line 95), and “obsequious sorrow” (line 96)?

Running through these phrases is the idea of duty.

What can you infer about Claudius's view of grief and its relationship to duty?

Claudius treats grief not as an emotion or feeling that may last for some time, but as a duty to be fulfilled which comes to a natural end.

In lines 96–98, of what fault does Claudius accuse Hamlet? Cite two words that support your response.

The words “obstinate” and “stubbornness” show that Claudius is accusing Hamlet of being stubborn by persisting in his grief.

What does Claudius mean when he calls Hamlet's grief “unmanly” in line 98?

Student responses may include:

- Hamlet is acting more like a woman than a man: Claudius is calling Hamlet effeminate.
- Hamlet is acting childish, behaving more like a boy than a grown man.

- ① It is important here that students consider both possible meanings of “unmanly,” as both are relevant to the central ideas of the play, in particular the concepts of duty and gender roles.
- ① A consideration of Hamlet's behavior as being potentially womanly could be important as a way of preparing students for their later work with Virginia Woolf.

Instruct students to read lines 102–105 (from “For what we know must be and is as common” to “Take it to heart? Fie, 'tis a fault to heaven”) and answer the following questions, taking notes as they do so.

- ① Consider providing students with the following definitions of *vulgar*:
 - “characterized by ignorance of or lack of good breeding or taste”
 - “indecent; obscene; lewd”
 - “crude; coarse; unrefined”
 - “of, pertaining to, or constituting the ordinary people in a society”
 - “current; popular; common”

In line 102, what does Claudius mean by “what we know must be”?

Claudius is referring to death.

How is the word *vulgar* used in line 103?

💬 *Vulgar* is used in line 103 to mean ordinary or common.

Which other word with similar meaning does Claudius use in lines 102–103? What is the impact of using these two words close together?

💬 Claudius uses the word “common.” He uses “common” and “vulgar” close together to emphasize that death is an everyday event.

Where earlier in the speech does Claudius make a similar point?

💬 In lines 93–95, Claudius also makes the point that death is a commonplace occurrence that happens to us all.

① Consider drawing students’ attention here to the emergence of mortality as a central idea of the play.

What does Claudius’s repeated insistence upon death as an everyday occurrence imply about Hamlet’s character?

💬 Claudius implies that Hamlet is being excessive in his grief by acting as though he were the first son ever to have lost a father. His suggestion is that Hamlet is unreasonable for mourning his father in this way, that he is failing to live up to his obligations as a man.

Instruct students to read lines 105–106 (from “Fie, ’tis a fault to heaven” to “A fault against the dead, a fault to nature”) and answer the following questions, taking notes as they do so.

What is the impact of the repetition of the word “fault” in lines 105–106 on Claudius’s depiction of Hamlet?

💬 It emphasizes that Hamlet is in the wrong, that he is committing a fault.

What is Hamlet’s “fault”?

💬 Hamlet’s fault is his excessive grief.

Against what and whom is this fault committed?

💬 The fault is committed against heaven, nature, and the dead.

Instruct students to read lines 107–110 (from “To reason most absurd, whose common theme” to “till he that died today / This must be so”) and answer the following questions, taking notes as they do so.

To what concept does Claudius appeal in lines 107–110?

☞ Claudius appeals to reason.

In line 107, how does Hamlet’s grief appear “to reason,” according to Claudius?

☞ Hamlet’s grief seems “absurd” to reason.

What is the reasonable attitude towards death, according to Claudius?

☞ According to Claudius, the reasonable attitude to death is “This must be so.”

If you could translate the speech so far into one sentence, what would it be?

☞ Hamlet, your grief at your father’s death is excessive and unreasonable because everyone must die and experience grief.

Share out responses, paying close attention to comprehension of the play in the last question.

Activity 5: Quick Write

10%

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

How do specific word choices in Claudius’s monologue impact the development of Hamlet’s character?

Instruct students to look at their text and notes to find evidence. 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 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.

① Keep Quick Writes from this lesson, because students will refer back to them in 11.1.2 Lesson 4.

Activity 6: Closing

10%

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to reread the text and respond in writing to the following prompt:

To what standards is Claudius holding Hamlet? Cite at least two pieces of textual evidence to support your claim.

Also for homework, students continue to read their Accountable Independent Reading (AIR) through the lens of their new focus standard (RL.11-12.2 or RI.11-12.2).

Introduce standard RL.11-12.2 or RI.11-12.2 as a focus standard to guide students' AIR, and model what applying a focus standard looks like. Inform students they should prepare for a brief 3–5 minute discussion that asks them to apply the language of the standards to their reading.

For example, RL.11-12.2 asks students to “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.” Students who read “My Last Duchess” might say the following:

- ☞ In “My Last Duchess,” the Duke’s madness becomes obvious when he states, “I gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together.” The central idea of madness interacts with the central ideas of power and status, since the Duke seems to have gotten away with silencing or perhaps killing the Duchess, and speaks freely about her absence in spite of his involvement.
- ▶ Students listen and follow along.

Homework

Reread the text and respond in writing to the following prompt:

To what standards is Claudius holding Hamlet? Cite at least two pieces of textual evidence to support your claim.

Continue with AIR through the lens of the new focus standard RL.11-12.2 or RI.11-12.2.