

11.1.2

Lesson 5

Introduction

In this lesson, students read and analyze lines 149–164 from Act 1.2 (from “And yet, within a month/Let me not think on’t” to “But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue”). In this, the second half of Hamlet’s first soliloquy, Hamlet laments his mother’s quick remarriage following his father’s death. Students engage in a discussion about the meaning of these lines and about how Shakespeare develops the Queen through this soliloquy. For the lesson assessment, students write about the impact of specific word choices on the development of the Queen’s character.

Students continue to work with standards RL.11-12.3 and RL.11-12.4 and talk explicitly about Shakespeare’s language that is “particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful.” By introducing students to Hamlet’s tone toward his mother (“frailty thy name is woman!”), this lesson prepares students to recognize concepts of gender and family roles discussed later in the unit. For homework, students reread the soliloquy to identify and analyze “particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful” language.

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.11-12.5	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

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 Hamlet's first soliloquy impact the development of the Queen's character?
High Performance Response(s)
<p>A High Performance Response should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cite specific words or phrases used to describe the Queen or her actions. Convey an understanding of how specific words Hamlet uses impact the Queen's development.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> frailty (n.) – moral weakness; liability to yield to temptation dexterity (n.) – skill or adroitness in using the hands or body; agility; mental adroitness or skill; cleverness
Vocabulary to teach (may include direct word work and/or questions)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> or ere (prep.) – before incestuous (adj.) – involving incest (sexual intercourse between closely related persons)

Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
<p>Standards & Text:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards: RL.11-12.3, RL.11-12.4, L.11-12.5 Text: <i>Hamlet</i>, Act 1.2, lines 149–164 (Masterful Reading: lines 133–164) <p>① In order to provide additional context, the Masterful Reading extends beyond the lines students read and discuss during the lesson.</p>	

Learning Sequence:	
1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda	1. 5%
2. Homework Accountability	2. 10%
3. Masterful Reading	3. 15%
4. Lines 149–164 Reading and Discussion	4. 55%
5. Quick Write	5. 10%
6. Closing	6. 5%

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 the assessed standards for this lesson: RL.11-12.3 and RL.11-12.4. Inform students that they will work in pairs to read and discuss the text before completing a Quick Write to demonstrate their learning.

- Students look at the agenda.

Explain to students that they will begin working with a new standard in this lesson: L.11-12.5. Instruct students to individually read this standard on the 11.1 Common Core Learning Standards Tool and assess their familiarity with and mastery of this standard.

- Students read standard L.11-12.5 and assess their familiarity on the Common Core Learning Standards Tool.

Instruct students to talk in pairs about what they think this standard means. Lead a brief discussion about the standard.

🗣️ Student responses may include the following:

- Analyze how different words are related to each other.
- Understand what authors mean when they use figurative language.
- Understand the specific meanings of words.
- Understanding nuance, i.e. subtle shades of meaning in words.

① It is important here to ensure that students grasp the meaning of *nuance*, as they will be working with this concept in 11.1.2 Lesson 13.

Activity 2: Homework Accountability

10%

Instruct students to talk in pairs about how they can apply their focus standard, RL.11-12.2 or RI.11-12.2, to their AIR. Lead a brief share out on the previous lesson's AIR homework assignment. Select several students (or student pairs) to explain how they applied their focus standard to their AIR text.

- ▶ Student pairs discuss and share how they applied their focus standard (RL.11-12.2 or RI.11-12.2) to their AIR text from the previous lesson's homework.

Instruct students to form a new pair and discuss the homework question: What evidence do we have that Hamlet's appeal to divine forces shapes his character and decisions?

🗣️ Student responses may include:

- Hamlet says, "that the Everlasting God had not fixed his canon 'gainst self-slaughter" (Act 1.2, lines 135–136) which demonstrates that Hamlet might commit suicide if God didn't forbid it.
- Hamlet's says "O God, God / How weary stale, flat, and unprofitable / Seem to me all the uses of this world!" (Act 1.2, lines 137–138) which suggests that Hamlet is dissatisfied with life.

① Students also conducted searches about the figure of Niobe as part of their homework for 11.1.2 Lesson 4. Students will draw on the results of their searches later in the lesson.

Activity 3: Masterful Reading

15%

Explain to students that throughout the lesson they will analyze how Shakespeare develops and relates characters, especially Hamlet and his mother, in Hamlet's first soliloquy. Remind students that one of their assessed standards is RL.11-12.4, which includes analyzing "language that is particularly fresh, engaging or beautiful."

Instruct students to independently reflect on what it means for language in literature to be "fresh, engaging, or beautiful." Then, invite students to share what they believe it means for language to be "fresh, engaging, or beautiful."

Student responses may include the following:

- Language that is fresh is unique or creative. Language that is engaging causes the reader to think. Language that is beautiful has a strong impact on a reader.
- Language that is fresh, engaging and beautiful is words and phrases that cause the reader to think, feel, or visualize something important or powerful.

Explain that whether language is "fresh, engaging, and beautiful" depends on readers' opinions and preferences, but people have quoted lines from *Hamlet* for hundreds of years, because they find the language to be "fresh, engaging, or beautiful."

► Students listen.

Have students listen to a masterful reading of Hamlet's first soliloquy in its entirety on lines 133–164 (from "O that this too, too sullied flesh would melt" to "But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue"), focusing on character development and "fresh, engaging, or beautiful" language.

► Students follow along, reading silently.

Allow time for students to annotate the soliloquy for language they identified during the masterful reading as "fresh, engaging, or beautiful." Students will use these annotations during the following reading and discussion.

Activity 4: Lines 149–164 Reading and Discussion

55%

Transition students to reading and discussion of lines 149–164 of Act 1.2. Direct students to the word *frailty* on line 150 and the word *dexterity* on line 162. If students do not know the meanings, explain that, in this context, *frailty* means "moral weakness; liability to yield to temptation" and *dexterity* means "skill or adroitness in using the hands or body; agility; mental adroitness or skill; cleverness." Ask students to annotate their texts with these definitions.

- ▶ Students annotate their texts, writing the definitions of *frailty* and *dexterity*.

Remind students that many uncommon or unfamiliar words are defined in the explanatory notes of the text. Direct students to the words and associated explanatory notes for *or ere* and *incestuous* on lines 151 and 162, respectively. Instruct students to annotate where these definitions are located.

- ▶ Students annotate for the definitions for *or ere* and *incestuous*.
-

Instruct pairs to reread lines 149–156 (from “And yet, within a month / Let me not think on’t” to “(O God, a beast that wants the discourse of reason / Would have mourned longer!), married with my uncle”) and discuss the questions that follow, taking notes as they do so.

- ① The remainder of this soliloquy is difficult to understand without context around the laws and customs of Hamlet’s time and references to Greek mythology. The explanatory notes printed in the text provide helpful information. If students do not have access to a version of the text with explanatory notes, the teacher will likely need to provide additional support.

Which words does Hamlet use to describe the length of time between his father’s death and his mother’s marriage?

- ☞ Hamlet says his mother remarried “within a month” (line 149) and within a “little month” (line 151).

What is the meaning of the phrase “frailty thy name is woman!” (line 150)?

- ☞ Hamlet means that women are weak.

To whom is Hamlet referring in this line?

- ☞ Hamlet is referring to his mother.

Describe Hamlet’s tone toward his mother in this line. Cite specific evidence to support your response.

- ☞ Student responses may include:
 - Hamlet uses the word “woman” instead of “Queen” or “Gertrude,” his mother’s name. This word choice demonstrates Hamlet’s upset or disappointed tone; he is so upset with her that he cannot even say her name.
 - The exclamation point shows that Hamlet is angry and agitated.
 - Hamlet’s use of “frailty” adds to an angry tone. Frailty is an insulting word. He is calling his mother weak.
-

Instruct students to refer to their searches about the figure of Niobe from the homework for 11.1.2 Lesson 4. Explain to students that what they learned during their searches will help them analyze the impact of Hamlet's words on line 153 and discuss the following question:

Who is Niobe? What does Hamlet mean when he says, “She followed my poor father’s body, / Like Niobe” (lines 152–153)?

- ☞ Niobe is the daughter of a Greek Goddess. Niobe lost her children, cried constantly, and was turned into a stone from which water continually flowed. Hamlet means the Queen grieved and cried extensively when Hamlet's father died.

Explain the comparison Hamlet makes on lines 154–155 “O God, a beast that wants the discourse of reason / Would have mourned longer!” What is the impact of this comparison on Hamlet's tone?

- ☞ Hamlet compares his mother to a beast by saying a beast would have spent more time mourning. This comparison contributes to Hamlet's disapproving tone towards his mother for her quick marriage.

What do the two comparisons on 153–155 suggest about Hamlet?

- ☞ Hamlet is torn about his feelings toward his mother. He first describes her as a sympathetic character, but then he describes her as a beast.

Instruct pairs to reread lines 157–164 (from “My father's brother but no more like my father” to “But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue”) and discuss the questions that follow, taking notes as they do so.

Paraphrase the comparison Hamlet uses to describe Claudius in lines 157–158 (“My father's brother but no more like my father,/Than I to Hercules”). What is the impact of using Hercules in this comparison?

- ☞ Hamlet says his father and Claudius are as different as Hamlet and Hercules. Hercules is a character of mythical strength, so using this example in the comparison emphasizes how much Hamlet believes Claudius is weak and inferior to the previous king.

① Consider drawing students' attention to their application of standard L.11-12.5.a through the process of interpreting figurative language.

Why does Hamlet call the Queen's tears “unrighteous”?

- ☞ Student responses may include:

- Hamlet thinks his mother has no right to cry over King Hamlet's death because she married Claudius too quickly, before she finished grieving.
- Hamlet believes his mother's relationship with Claudius is inappropriate and immoral, so her tears are as well.

① Consider drawing students' attention to their application of standard L.11-12.5.b through the process of analyzing nuances in the meaning of a word.

What is the meaning of the phrase "to post / With such dexterity to incestuous sheets"? How does this phrase contribute to the development of the Queen's character?

- 💬 This phrase describes how quickly and easily the Queen moved to a physical relationship with her deceased husband's brother. This phrase develops the Queen as a disrespectful or immoral character.

Instruct students to annotate the text for words Shakespeare uses in reference to the Queen.

- 💬 Students may note words such as "unrighteous," "wicked," and "incestuous."

Activity 5: Quick Write

10%

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

How do specific word choices in Hamlet's first soliloquy impact the development of the Queen'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.

Activity 6: Closing

5%

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to identify an example of “particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful” language from the soliloquy and write about the meaning and impact of the language.

Also, in preparation for the reading in 11.1.2 Lesson 6, share with students the definition of chastity as “the state or quality of being chaste (i.e. refraining from sexual intercourse that is regarded as contrary to morality or religion).” Instruct students to carry out a search for information about the meaning and role of chastity in Elizabethan England.

Homework

Identify an example of “particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful” language from the soliloquy and write about the meaning and impact of the language.

Search for information about the meaning and role of chastity in Elizabethan England.

- ① At the teacher’s discretion, this homework may be extended to trace how the meaning and role of chastity has changed from Elizabethan England to modern times.