

# INTRO TO HAMLET

## Lesson 2: My Last Duchess

### Introduction

In this lesson, students continue their study of Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess," building their reading skills through a close exploration of lines 5–21 (from "I said / 'Frà Pandolf' by design, for never read" to "For calling up that spot of joy"), in which the Duke further describes the Duchess. Students also begin to practice the important skill of text annotation. Students listen to a masterful reading of the poem before annotating the text in pairs and engaging in small group discussions centered on Browning's choices regarding the development of the Duke's character. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: What does the reader learn about the Duke through his description of the Duchess in lines 1–21 of the poem?

For homework, students reread lines 9–10 ("But to myself they turned (since none puts by / The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)") and respond to a writing prompt.

### Standards

Assessed Standard(s)	
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)	
W.9-10.9.a	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. a. Apply <i>grades 9-10 Reading standards</i> to literature (e.g., "Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work [e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare]").
SL.9-10.1.b	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grades 9-10 topics, texts and issues</i> , building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

	b. Work with peers to set rules for collegial discussions and decision-making (e.g., informal consensus, taking votes on key issues, presentation of alternate views), clear goals and deadlines, and individual roles as needed.
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## 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"> <li>What does the reader learn about the Duke through his description of the Duchess in lines 1–21 of the poem?</li> </ul>
High Performance Response(s)
<p>A High Performance Response should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify at least one aspect of the Duke’s character (e.g., The Duke thinks very highly of himself, or the Duke is jealous and possessive.).</li> <li>Demonstrate the emergence of this aspect of the Duke’s character in lines 1–21 (e.g., The Duke’s references to Frà Pandolf (lines 3 and 6), who seems to be a famous painter, imply that the Duke thinks highly of himself for owning such a painting. Secondly, the Duke’s use of “durst,” which means “dare,” in the phrase “as they would ask me, if they durst” (line 11), suggests that the Duke thinks he is such an important person that people believe it is risky to ask him about the painting. The reader also learns that the Duke is jealous and possessive of the Duchess. He dismisses the compliments Frà Pandolf pays the Duchess as “such stuff” (line 19). Also, he implies his displeasure that the Duchess is pleased by something other than him. He says it is not only “her husband’s presence” that “call[s] that spot of joy” into the Duchess’ cheek (lines 14–15).).</li> </ul>

## Vocabulary

Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>durst (v.) – dared</li> <li>mantle (n.) – a loose, sleeveless cloak or cape</li> <li>laps (v.) – lays partly over something underneath</li> </ul>
Vocabulary to teach (may include direct word work and/or questions)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>design (v.) – plan or project</li> </ul>

**Additional vocabulary to support English Language Learners (to provide directly)**

- thus (adv.) – in this way or manner; like this
- presence (n.) – the fact of being in a particular place
- flush (n.) – a redness on a person’s face because of emotion
- courtesy (n.) – polite behavior that shows respect for other people

## Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
<b>Standards &amp; Text:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standards: RL.9-10.3, W. 9-10.9.a, SL. 9-10.1.b</li> <li>• Text: “My Last Duchess” by Robert Browning, lines 5–21</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. Introduction to Annotation</li> <li>4. Masterful Reading</li> <li>5. Reading and Discussion</li> <li>6. Quick Write</li> <li>7. Closing</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 15%</li> <li>2. 10%</li> <li>3. 10%</li> <li>4. 10%</li> <li>5. 40%</li> <li>6. 10%</li> <li>7. 5%</li> </ol>

## Materials

- Student copies of the 11.1 Common Core Learning Standards Tool (refer to 11.1.1 Lesson 1)
- Copies of the Annotation Markings Bookmark for each student
- Free Audio Resource: <https://archive.org/> (Google search terms: My Last Duchess, Zachariah Wells)
- 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

<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 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

15%

Begin by reviewing the agenda and the assessed standard for this lesson: RL. 9-10.3. In this lesson, students explore Browning’s choices about how to introduce and develop the Duke’s character in lines 5–21 (from “I said / ‘Frà Pandolf’ by design, for never read” to “For calling up that spot of joy”). To support their analysis, students practice annotating the text as an important part of reading and using textual evidence.

- ▶ Students look at the agenda.

Instruct students to take out their copies of the 11.1 Common Core Learning Standards Tool. Inform students that in this lesson, they begin to work with three new standards: RL. 9-10.3, W. 9-10.9.a, and SL. 9-10.1.b. Instruct students to individually read these standards on their tools and assess their familiarity with and mastery of them.

- ▶ Students read and assess their familiarity with these standards.

Instruct students to focus on RL. 9-10.3. Ask students the following questions:

### What are the elements of a story or drama?

💬 Student responses should include:

- Plot/story
- Character
- Structure
- Setting

### What does the standard ask students to do with the elements of a story or drama?

- 💬 The standard asks students to think about the author’s choices regarding these elements and discuss the impact of these choices.

Instruct students to focus on W. 9-10.9.a and SL. 9-10.1.b and talk in pairs about what they think each standard means. Lead a brief discussion about the standards. Remind students to pay attention to the overarching standards W. 9-10.9 and SL. 9-10.1 as well as substandards W. 9-10.9.a and SL. 9-10.1.b.

🗨 Student responses for W. 9-10.9.a may include:

- The standard requires students to gather and use evidence from literary texts to support ideas in writing.

🗨 Student responses for SL. 9-10.1.b may include:

- Students participate in cooperative discussions.
- Students work together in pairs and with all their classmates.
- Students are polite and fair in discussions.
- Students listen to others' ideas and share their own related ideas.
- Students set clear goals.
- Students keep track of time during discussions.
- Students stay focused during discussions.
- Students establish and take on individual roles during discussions.

① Make sure students are able to define what *civil* and *democratic* mean in the context of a discussion. Ask for volunteers to define these words.

Ask students if they have anything to add to the list, and agree as a class upon a list of criteria for discussion that meets the standards and class/school norms.

Inform students that they practice applying their understanding of SL. 9-10.1.b in small group discussions later in the lesson.

## Activity 2: Homework Accountability

10%

Instruct students to take out the second part of the previous lesson's homework assignment. (Read lines 5–21 of “My Last Duchess.” Box any unfamiliar words and look up their definitions. Choose the definition that makes the most sense in the context and write a brief definition above or near the word in the text.) Instruct student pairs to share and discuss the vocabulary words they identified and defined.

🗨 Students may identify the following words: *design*, *durst*, *mantle*, and *laps*.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** Students may also identify the following words: *thus*, *presence*, *flush*, and *courtesy*.

① Definitions are provided in the Vocabulary box in this lesson.

## Activity 3: Introduction to Annotation

**10%**

Ask students the following questions about the importance of annotation.

### What are some purposes for marking the text?

☞ Student responses may include:

Marking the text helps students to:

- Remember what they are reading by writing their thoughts about the text.
- Keep track of important ideas.
- Think about unfamiliar words.
- Question the text or make connections between ideas.

① Consider explaining to students that *annotation* is an important skill for reading and gathering textual evidence. Note the relationship of annotation to standard RL. 9-10.1: annotation helps students look closely at text evidence to determine a text's explicit and implicit meanings, and standard W. 9-10.9.a: annotation helps students gather evidence for use in their writing.

### How does annotation change the way students read?

☞ Student responses may include:

- Annotation connects the student to the text more deeply by making the student read more actively and pay close attention to details.
- Annotation makes it difficult to just skim-read because it slows down the student's reading.

Distribute copies of the Annotation Markings Bookmark. Explain that readers use shorthand ways of marking text so as not to take time away from their reading. Display and explain the following codes:

- Box unfamiliar words.
- Star (\*) important or repeating ideas.
- Put a question mark (?) next to a section you are questioning or confused about, and note your question.
- Use an exclamation point (!) for connections between ideas, or ideas that strike or surprise you in some way, and provide a brief note explaining the connection.

Share with students that, besides using the codes, marking the text with their thoughts in relation to the codes is important. Explain that students will use these codes throughout the year, beginning with their reading of "My Last Duchess," to think more deeply about the details in the text and keep track of their thoughts about the text.

- ▶ Students write the annotation codes and their explanations in their notebooks or refer to the Annotation Markings Bookmark.
- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** To help students remember annotation codes, consider posting them in the classroom in addition to providing them to students on the bookmark.

### Activity 4: Masterful Reading

**10%**

Have students listen to a masterful reading of “My Last Duchess.” Ask students to pay attention to how the Duke describes the Duchess.

- ▶ Students follow along, reading silently.
- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider posting or projecting the following guiding question to support students in their reading throughout this lesson:

**What does the reader learn about the Duke in lines 5–21?**

### Activity 5: Reading and Discussion

**40%**

Instruct students to form small groups. Post or project each set of questions below for students to discuss. Instruct students to continue to annotate the text as they read and discuss.

Instruct student groups to read lines 5–21 of “My Last Duchess” (from “I said / ‘Frà Pandolf’ by design, for never read” to “For calling up that spot of joy”) and focus on their observations about the Duke.

- ① Consider reminding students that working in groups is an opportunity to apply standard SL. 9-10.1.b when building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively in civil, democratic discussions with their peers. Also, remind students to use their annotations to help them answer the questions.
- ① This is a syntactically complex and dense section of text and students may need some support for comprehension.

Instruct student groups to read lines 6–12 (from “for never read / Strangers like you that pictured countenance” to “if they durst, How such a glance came there”), ignoring the words in parentheses in lines 9 and 10. Instruct student groups to paraphrase these lines.

- 💬 Strangers like you always ask me, if they dare, how the Duchess came to look that way in the portrait.

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle, consider asking the following questions.

**Who is the “they” the speaker refers to?**

💬 “They” refers to strangers who look at the painting of the Duchess.

**To what does the speaker refer when he says “there”?**

💬 By “there” the speaker means the Duchess’s face, or “countenance” (line 7).

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

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Instruct student groups to read lines 5–12 (from “I said / ‘Frà Pandolf’ by design, for never read” to “if they durst / How such a glance came there”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

**To whom does the Duke refer in line 6?**

💬 The Duke refers to Frà Pandolf, the painter from line 3.

**What does *by design* mean in this context?**

💬 In this context, *by design* means “on purpose or intentionally,” because *design* means “to plan.”

① **Differentiation Consideration:** To scaffold up to the definition of *by design*, instruct students to look up and share different definitions of *design*. Ask students what *by design* might mean if *design* means “plan or project.”

**Why does the Duke claim in lines 6–12 that he mentions Frà Pandolf “by design”?**

💬 The Duke claims that those who view the portrait are so stunned by it that they ask him “[h]ow such a glance came there” (line 12), or who was talented enough to paint such a lifelike picture.

**For what other reasons might the Duke mention Frà Pandolf twice in the first six lines of the poem?**

- 💬 Student responses may include:
- Frà Pandolf may be a famous artist or a painter known for his skill.
  - The Duke may be trying to impress his visitor.

**In line 11, what do the words “if they durst” suggest about the Duke’s view of himself?**

💬 The Duke views himself as an important or intimidating person, because “durst” means “dare,” so the Duke believes that few people dare ask him questions.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.



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Instruct student groups to reread lines 13–21 (from “Sir, ’twas not / Her husband’s presence only” to “For calling up that spot of joy”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

**What does the Duke imply when he uses the word *only* in line 14?**

- ☞ The Duke implies that it should be “her husband’s presence only” that causes her such pleasure.

**What does the phrase “that spot of joy” suggest about the Duchess? What does the Duke imply in lines 15–21 might have caused such an expression?**

- ☞ The Duke implies that the Duchess is blushing with pleasure. The Duchess was pleased by the “courtes[ies]” (line 20), or compliments, from Frà Pandolf.

**What does the Duke mean by the phrase “such stuff” in line 19? What does the Duke’s use of the phrase “such stuff” suggest about his attitude towards Frà Pandolf?**

- ☞ The phrase “such stuff” refers to Frà Pandolf’s compliments to the Duchess. The Duke is dismissive of Frà Pandolf’s compliments—he thinks them unworthy of attention, because the phrase “such stuff” makes the compliments sound unimportant or frivolous.

**How did the Duchess respond to “such stuff” (line 19)?**

- ☞ The Duchess was pleased by the compliments: “such stuff / Was courtesy, she thought” (lines 19–20), and she would blush with pleasure.

**What does the Duke imply when he remarks that “such stuff / Was courtesy she thought, and cause enough / For calling up that spot of joy” (lines 19–21)?**

- ☞ Student responses may include:
  - The Duke implies that he disapproves of the Duchess’s pleasure in “such stuff” (line 19).
  - The Duke’s remark on line 19 also implies that he is possessive of the Duchess, because he disapproves of the idea that something other than “[h]er husband’s presence” (line 14) makes her happy.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

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## Activity 6: Quick Write

**10%**

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

**What does the reader learn about the Duke through his description of the Duchess in lines 1–21 of the poem?**

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.

① Students will use their responses to this Quick Write again in Lesson 4.

**Activity 7: Closing****5%**

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to reread lines 9–10 of “My Last Duchess” (“But to myself they turned (since none puts by / The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)”) and respond in writing to the following prompt:

**What does the reader learn about the portrait? How does this information develop the Duke’s character?**

Instruct students to use this lesson’s vocabulary wherever possible in their written responses. Also remind students to use the Short Response Checklist and Rubric to guide their written responses.

**Homework**

Reread lines 9–10 of “My Last Duchess” (“But to myself they turned (since none puts by / The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)”) and respond in writing to the following prompt:

**What does the reader learn about the portrait? How does this information develop the Duke’s character?**

Use this lesson’s vocabulary wherever possible in your written response. Use the Short Response Rubric and Checklist to guide your written response.

## Annotation Markings Bookmark

Annotation Markings Bookmark	Annotation Markings Bookmark	Annotation Markings Bookmark	Annotation Markings Bookmark
Box unfamiliar words.	Box unfamiliar words.	Box unfamiliar words.	Box unfamiliar words.
Star (*) important or repeating ideas.	Star (*) important or repeating ideas.	Star (*) important or repeating ideas.	Star (*) important or repeating ideas.
Put a question mark (?) next to a section you're questioning or confused about.	Put a question mark (?) next to a section you're questioning or confused about.	Put a question mark (?) next to a section you're questioning or confused about.	Put a question mark (?) next to a section you're questioning or confused about.
Use an exclamation point (!) for connections between ideas or ideas that strike you or surprise you in some way.	Use an exclamation point (!) for connections between ideas or ideas that strike you or surprise you in some way.	Use an exclamation point (!) for connections between ideas or ideas that strike you or surprise you in some way.	Use an exclamation point (!) for connections between ideas or ideas that strike you or surprise you in some way.
Remember to write notes in the margin as you read to record your ideas and thoughts.	Remember to write notes in the margin as you read to record your ideas and thoughts.	Remember to write notes in the margin as you read to record your ideas and thoughts.	Remember to write notes in the margin as you read to record your ideas and thoughts.