

INTRO TO HAMLET

Lesson 6: My Last Duchess

Introduction

In this final lesson of the unit, the End-of-Unit Assessment, students engage in an evidence-based discussion of Robert Browning's choices in introducing and developing the Duke over the course of "My Last Duchess." This discussion prepares students to craft a one-paragraph analysis of how the revelation at the end of the poem impacts the development of the Duke's character over the course of the text.

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.
W.9-10.2.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 with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.
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]").
Addressed Standard(s)	
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 formal one-paragraph response 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"> How does the revelation in lines 45–47 impact the development of the Duke’s character over the course of the poem? <p>① Student responses are assessed using the 11.1.1 End-of-Unit Text Analysis Rubric.</p>
High Performance Response(s)
<p>A High Performance Response should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the revelation in lines 45–47 (e.g., The Duke reveals that he disposed of his wife, possibly by murder, and is now seeking to marry the Count’s “fair daughter[]” (line 52).). Determine several aspects of the Duke’s character that emerge over the course of the poem (e.g., jealous, controlling, proud, arrogant, obsessed with possessions, etc.). Discuss how Browning develops these aspects through the revelation at the end of the poem (see examples below). <p>A High Performance Response may include the following evidence in support of a one-paragraph analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The revelation that “all smiles stopped together” (line 46) confirms the suspicions Browning planted that the Duke is a jealous and controlling character whose desire to possess the Duchess completely may have driven him to murder. The Duke’s actions in silencing his Duchess and suppressing her smiles show him to be ruthless in his desire for control. The ending of the poem confirms the Duke’s presentation of himself as a powerful man, at whose commands “all smiles stopped” (line 46), and who feels confident enough in his status that he is comfortable revealing his actions to the representative of the father of a woman whom he hopes to marry. He shows himself to be both powerful and arrogant. The power of his commands to stop all smiles also contradicts the Duke’s statement that he is a man with little skill in speech: clearly, when he speaks, others listen and act. The revelation and the ending of the poem sheds new light on the Duke as a man who appreciates fine art: his casual reference to Neptune in the closing lines of the poem confirm our suspicions

that he viewed his last Duchess not as a person, but as a piece of artwork to be admired.

- The revelation undermines the Duke's reliability as a narrator: the extreme lengths to which he takes his jealousy and possessiveness make the reader doubt his description of the Duchess as a slightly flirtatious woman who is "too soon made glad" (line 22) and "[t]oo easily impressed" (line 23).
- The ending of the poem creates a great deal of uncertainty and raises many questions. For example, what was the fate of the last Duchess, what was her real character and the nature of her relationship with the Duke, and to what extent can the Duke be considered sane?"

Vocabulary

Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None.*
Vocabulary to teach (may include direct word work and/or questions)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None.*
Additional vocabulary to support English Language Learners (to provide directly)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None.*

*Because this is not a close reading lesson, there is no specified vocabulary. However, in the process of returning to the text, students may uncover unfamiliar words. Teachers can guide students to make meaning of these words using the strategies outlined in L.9-10.4.a-d.

Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
Standards & Text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards: RL.9-10.3, W. 9-10.2.b, W. 9-10.9.a, SL. 9-10.1.b • Text: "My Last Duchess" by Robert Browning 	
Learning Sequence: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda 2. Homework Accountability 3. Small Group Discussion and Evidence Gathering 4. 11.1.1 End-of-Unit Assessment 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 5% 2. 15% 3. 25% 4. 50%

Materials

- Copies of the “My Last Duchess” Discussion Tool for each student
- Copies of the 11.1.1 End-of-Unit Assessment for each student
- Copies of the 11.1.1 End-of-Unit Text Analysis Rubric and Checklist for each student

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. 9-10.3, W. 9-10.2.b, and W. 9-10.9.a. In this lesson, students participate in small group discussions in which they gather and organize ideas and evidence in preparation for the End-of-Unit Assessment. Students then complete the End-of-Unit Assessment where they use textual details from “My Last Duchess” to craft a one-paragraph response about how the revelation at the end of the poem impacts the development of the Duke’s character over the course of the text.

- Students look at the agenda.

Activity 2: Homework Accountability

15%

Instruct students to take out their responses to the previous lesson’s homework assignment. (Respond briefly in writing to the following prompt: Why is the bronze statue described in lines 54–56 important to the Duke?) Instruct students to share their responses to the homework assignment in pairs.

- 💬 Student responses may include:

- The statue is “thought a rarity ” (line 55), an object the Duke values as part of his art collection.
- The statue was cast in bronze especially for the Duke.
- The statue is of Neptune taming a sea horse, which mimics the Duke’s need for power and control.

Activity 3: Small Group Discussion and Evidence Gathering

25%

Direct students to form small groups, and distribute the “My Last Duchess” Discussion Tool. Instruct students to use the tool to discuss the following prompt:

Reread the poem to determine what the text says explicitly and what the text leaves uncertain about the Duke’s character.

Remind students to practice building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively in a civil, democratic discussion with their peers (SL. 9-10.1.b).

- ▶ In a collaborative discussion, students add descriptions and evidence of the Duke’s character into the “My Last Duchess” Discussion Tool. Each student should record ideas on his or her own tool for use in the End-of-Unit Assessment.

Activity 4: 11.1.1 End-of-Unit Assessment

55%

Instruct students to write a one-paragraph response to the following prompt:

How does the revelation in lines 45–47 impact the development of the Duke’s character over the course of the poem?

Remind students to use the 11.1.1 End-of-Unit Text Analysis Rubric to guide their written responses. Ask students to use this unit’s vocabulary wherever possible in their written responses. Remind students to refer to the notes, tools, and annotated text from the previous lessons.

- ① Consider instructing students to reference their responses to the 11.1.1 Lesson 1 Quick Write. Reviewing their initial impressions of meaning and tone in the first 8 lines of the poem may support an understanding of the Duke’s development as an unreliable narrator over the course of the poem, as the reader learns more about his relationship with the Duchess and her eventual disappearance or demise.
- ① Display the prompt for students to see, or provide the prompt in hard copy.
 - ▶ Students independently answer the prompt using evidence from the text.

See the High Performance Response at the beginning of this lesson.

① Students who finish early can read their AIR text.

“My Last Duchess” Discussion Tool

Name:		Class:		Date:	
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Directions: In the first column, record what the text says explicitly about the Duke. In the second column, record aspects of the Duke’s character the text leaves uncertain.

What does the text say explicitly about the Duke’s character?	Which aspects of the Duke’s character does the text leave uncertain?

Model “My Last Duchess” Discussion Tool

Name:		Class:		Date:	
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Directions: In the first column, record what the text says explicitly about the Duke. In the second column, record aspects of the Duke’s character the text leaves uncertain.

What does the text say explicitly about the Duke’s character?	Which aspects of the Duke’s character does the text leave uncertain?
JEALOUSY/CONTROLLING NATURE: The Duke keeps the portrait behind a curtain that only he is allowed to draw (lines 9–10). He is upset by the fact that the Duchess was pleased by all she looked upon, exclaiming that “her looks went everywhere” (line 24), and he accuses her of having “[a] heart ... too soon made glad” (line 22).	MURDERER? It is left uncertain whether or not the Duke killed his wife or got rid of her by other means such as sending her to a convent. He merely notes that “I gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together” (lines 45–46).
PRIDE: He refers to compliments and trifles given to his Duchess as “such stuff” (line 19), indicating that he feels such things are beneath him. He dismisses a man who broke a cherry bough for the Duchess as “some officious fool” (line 27). He is proud of his “nine-hundred-years-old name” and thinks that the Duchess should rate this above all gifts: “She thanked men,—good! but thanked / Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked / My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name / With anybody’s gift” (lines 31–34). He views the idea of correcting his Duchess as “stooping” (line 42) or beneath him—suggesting that he is too proud to correct her.	MADMAN? We are left uncertain as to the sanity of the Duke: is he a murderous mad man who is calmly recounting the killing of his wife, or is he merely a snobbish eccentric lover of art?
POWER: The Duke is powerful enough to silence the Duchess: “I gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together” (lines 45–46).	RELATIONSHIP WITH WIFE? The Duke’s relationship to his wife is left ambiguous; it is not clear whether he ever “stoop[ed]” (line 43) to correct her or whether they quarreled about her friendliness.

<p><u>ARROGANCE:</u> The Duke remarks that people would ask him about the portrait “if they durst” (line 11), implying that he sees himself as an intimidating and important figure. He is also arrogant enough to imply in lines 45–46 that he may have murdered his wife: “I gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together.”</p>	
<p><u>LOVE OF ART:</u> The Duke clearly takes pride in his art collection. He shows pride in the “wonder” that is Frà Pandolf’s painting (line 3). He also takes pains to point out the “rarity” (line 55) of the bronze statue of Neptune taming a sea horse in the final lines.</p>	

11.1.1 End-of-Unit Assessment

Text-Based Response

Your Task: Rely on your reading and analysis of “My Last Duchess” to write a well-developed response to the following prompt:

How does the revelation in lines 45–47 impact the development of the Duke’s character over the course of the poem?

Your writing will be assessed using the 11.1.1 End-of-Unit Text Analysis Rubric.

Guidelines:

Be sure to:

- Closely read the prompt
- Address all elements of the prompt in your response
- Paraphrase, quote, and reference relevant evidence to support your claim
- Organize your ideas in a cohesive and coherent manner
- Maintain a formal style of writing
- Follow the conventions of standard written English

CCSS: RL.11-12.3, W.11-12.2.b, W.11-12.9.a

Commentary on the Task:

This task measures RL.11-12.3 because it demands that students:

- Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama.

This task measures W.11-12.2.b because it demands that students:

- 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.

This task measures W.11-12.9.a because it demands that students:

- Draw evidence from literary texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

11.1.1 End-of-Unit Text Analysis Rubric

____ / ____ (Total points)

Criteria	4 – Responses at this Level:	3 – Responses at this Level:	2 – Responses at this Level:	1 – Responses at this Level:
Content and Analysis The extent to which the response analyzes the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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).	Skillfully analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story.	Accurately analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story.	With partial accuracy, analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story.	Inaccurately analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story.
Command of Evidence and Reasoning The extent to which the response thoroughly develops the topic through the effective selection and analysis of 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. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2 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.	Thoroughly and skillfully develop the topic with 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. (W.11-12.2.b)	Develop the topic with significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic. (W.11-12.2.b)	Partially develop the topic with weak facts, extended definitions, details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic. (W.11-12.2.b)	Minimally develop the topic, providing few or irrelevant facts, extended definitions, details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic. (W.11-12.2.b)

Criteria	4 – Responses at this Level:	3 – Responses at this Level:	2 – Responses at this Level:	1 – Responses at this Level:
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.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.				
Command of Evidence and Reasoning The extent to which the response draws evidence from literary texts to support analysis, reflection, or research. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.9.a Draw evidence from literary texts to support analysis, reflection, and research; apply <i>grades 11–12 Reading standards</i> to literature.	Skillfully utilize textual evidence from literary texts to support analysis, reflection, or research.	Accurately utilize textual evidence from literary texts to support analysis, reflection, or research.	Somewhat effectively or with partial accuracy utilize textual evidence from literary texts to support analysis, reflection, or research.	Ineffectively or inaccurately utilize textual evidence from literary texts to support analysis, reflection, or research.

- A response that is a personal response and makes little or no reference to the task or text can be scored no higher than a 1.
- A response that is totally copied from the text with no original writing must be given a 0.
- A response that is totally unrelated to the task, illegible, incoherent, blank, or unrecognizable as English must be scored as a 0.

11.1.1 End-of-Unit Text Analysis Checklist

Assessed Standards: _____

	Does my response...	✓
Content and Analysis	Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate the elements of a story or drama? (RL.11-12.3)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Command of Evidence and Reasoning	Develop the topic with the most significant and relevant textual evidence? (W.11-12.2.b)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Use textual evidence to support analysis, reflection, or research? (W.11-12.9.a)	<input type="checkbox"/>