

10.5

Lesson 5

Introduction

In this lesson, students read and analyze Act 1.2, lines 149–164 (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 how Shakespeare develops the characters of Hamlet and the Queen, and their relationship with each other, through this soliloquy. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: How do specific word choices in Hamlet’s first soliloquy impact the development of the Queen’s character?

For homework, students identify an example of “the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone” (RL.9-10.4) from the soliloquy and write about the meaning and impact of the language. Also for homework, students conduct a brief search for information about the meaning and role of *chastity* in Elizabethan England.

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.
RL.9-10.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).
Addressed Standard(s)	
L.9-10.4.c	<p>Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on <i>grades 9-10 reading and content</i>, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.</p> <p>c. Consult general and 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</p>

	standard usage.
L.9-10.5.a, b	<p>Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.</p> <p>a. Interpret figures of speech (e.g., euphemism, oxymoron) in context and analyze their role in the text.</p> <p>b. Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.</p>

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"> 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 Hamlet uses to describe the Queen or her actions (e.g., “frailty” (line 150), “unrighteous” (line 159), “wicked speed” (line 161), “incestuous” (line 162), etc.). Convey an understanding of how specific words Hamlet uses impact the Queen’s development (e.g., Shakespeare develops the Queen’s character by describing Hamlet’s opinion of the Queen’s marriage to Claudius. Hamlet first criticizes his mother for the brief duration between his father’s death and her marriage to a new husband. He describes the duration as “a little month” (line 151), suggesting it was not even a full month between her husband’s death and her remarriage. Hamlet is so angry with his mother that he compares her to a “beast” without “reason” (line 154), because even an unthinking animal would mourn its mate longer than a month before finding a new mate. Therefore, Hamlet determines that the Queen’s tears are “unrighteous” (line 159) and the sheets she shares with her new husband as “incestuous” (line 162). Words like “unrighteous” (line 159), “wicked” (line 161), and “incestuous” (line 162) demonstrate that Hamlet judges his mother harshly for her marriage to Claudius.).

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
- chastity (n.) – the state or quality of being chaste (i.e., refraining from sexual intercourse that is regarded as contrary to morality or religion)

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

- or ere (prep.) – before
- incestuous (adj.) – involving incest, sexual intercourse between closely related persons
- post (v.) – rush (as in riding a post-horse)

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

- mourned (v.) – felt or showed great sadness because someone has died
- unrighteous (adj.) – not morally good

Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
Standards & Text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards: RL.9-10.3, RL.9-10.4, L. 9-10.4.c, L. 9-10.5.a, b • Text: <i>Hamlet</i> by William Shakespeare, 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: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda 2. Homework Accountability 3. Masterful Reading 4. Reading and Discussion 5. Quick Write 6. Closing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 10% 2. 15% 3. 10% 4. 50% 5. 10% 6. 5%

Materials

- Student copies of the Common Core Learning Standards Tool (refer to 11.1.1 Lesson 1)
- 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

10%

Begin by reviewing the agenda and the assessed standards for this lesson: RL. 9-10.3 and RL. 9-10.4. In this lesson, students work in pairs to read and discuss the text before completing a Quick Write to demonstrate their learning.

- ▶ Students look at the agenda.

Inform students that throughout this lesson they 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. 9-10.4, which includes analyzing "the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone."

Instruct students to Think, Pair, Share about what "the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone."

💬 Student responses may include:

- 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.

Instruct students to take out their copies of the Common Core Learning Standards Tool. Inform students that in this lesson they begin to work with a new standard: L.9-10.5.a, b. Instruct students to individually read this standard on their tools and assess their familiarity with and mastery of it.

- ▶ Students read and assess their familiarity with standard L.9-10.5.a, b.

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

💬 Student responses may include:

- Students analyze how different words are related to each other.
- Students determine what authors mean when they use figurative language.
- Students determine the specific meanings of words.
- Students analyze nuance, or subtle shades of meaning in words.

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

Activity 2: Homework Accountability

15%

Instruct students to take out their responses to the previous lesson's homework assignment. (Reread Act 1.2, lines 133–149 and respond in writing to the following prompt: To what extent does Hamlet's appeal to divine forces shape his character and decisions? Cite two pieces of textual evidence to support your claim.) Instruct students to Turn-and-Talk in pairs about their responses to the homework assignment.

💬 Student responses may include:

- Hamlet says, "that the Everlasting God had not fixed his canon 'gainst self-slaughter" (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!" (lines 137–138), which suggests that Hamlet is complaining to God about his dissatisfaction with life.

Activity 3: Masterful Reading

10%

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"). Ask students to focus on "fresh, engaging, or beautiful" language.

- ▶ 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:

How does Shakespeare develop the relationship between Hamlet and his mother?

Activity 4: Reading and Discussion

50%

Instruct students to form pairs. 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.

- 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. Consider providing additional support if students do not have access to a version of the text with explanatory notes.

Instruct student pairs to read lines 149–157 (from “And yet, within a month / (Let me not think on ‘t” to “married with my uncle, / My father’s brother”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

Provide students with the following definition: *frailty* means “moral weakness; liability to yield to temptation.”

- ① Students may be familiar with this word. Consider asking students to volunteer a definition before providing one to the group.

- ▶ Students write the definition of *frailty* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the following definition: *mourned* means “felt or showed great sadness because someone has died.”

- ▶ Students write the definition of *mourned* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

Direct students to the explanatory notes for definitions of the following word: *or ere*.

- ① Consider drawing students’ attention to their application of standard L.11-12.4.c through the process of determining word meaning through the glossary in the explanatory notes.

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 do these words suggest about Hamlet’s attitude towards the timing of his mother’s remarriage?

- By describing the length of time as “within a month” (line 149) and a “little month” (line 151), Hamlet suggests that the time between his father’s death and his mother’s remarriage is far too short.

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?

- The “woman” Hamlet is referring to is his mother.

Describe Hamlet’s tone toward his mother in line 150. 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.

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

- “Niobe” (line 153) 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’s description of the Queen when she followed her husband’s body “Like Niobe, all tears,” represents how the Queen grieved and cried extensively when Hamlet’s father died (line 153).

Explain the comparison Hamlet makes in lines 154–155 when he says, “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 suggests that his mother is worse than a “beast” without “reason” (line 154), for even an animal would have mourned its mate’s death longer than Hamlet’s mother mourned the death of his father. By suggesting that his mother is worse than an unreasonable “beast” or animal, he is further demonstrating his critical and angry tone towards her for her quick marriage.

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

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

🗨 Student responses may include:

- Hamlet is torn about his feelings toward his mother. He first describes her as “Niobe,” a woman who was “all tears” (line 153) when mourning the death of her husband, but then he describes her as a “beast” without “reason” (line 154) for marrying so quickly after her husband’s death.
- The comparisons suggest that Hamlet strongly disapproves of the change in his mother from “Niobe,” a woman who was “all tears” (line 153) at the loss of her husband, to a “beast” without “reason” (line 154) who marries within a month of her husband’s death.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Instruct student pairs to read 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 answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

Provide students with the following definition: *dexterity* means “skill or adroitness in using the hands or body; agility; mental adroitness or skill; cleverness.”

① Students may be familiar with this word. Consider asking students to volunteer a definition before providing one to the group.

- ▶ Students write the definition of *dexterity* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the following definition: *unrighteous* means “not morally good.”

- ▶ Students write the definition of *unrighteous* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

Direct students to the explanatory notes for definitions of the following words: *Hercules*, *incestuous*, and *post*.

① Consider drawing students’ attention to their application of standard L.11-12.4.c through the process of determining word meaning through the glossary in the explanatory notes.

Summarize Hamlet’s description of 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 description?

- 🗨️ Hamlet says his father and Claudius are as different as Hamlet and Hercules. Hercules is a mythical character of great 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" (line 159)?

- 🗨️ Student responses may include:
 - Hamlet believes his mother married Claudius too quickly, making the tears she shed for her husband's death "unrighteous" or wrong (line 159).
 - Hamlet believes his mother's relationship with Claudius is inappropriate and immoral, so her tears are also "unrighteous" (line 159).

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" (lines 161–162)? How does this phrase contribute to the development of the Queen's character?

- 🗨️ This phrase describes how quickly, with "most wicked speed" (line 161), and how easily, "with such dexterity" (line 162), the Queen moved to a physical relationship with her deceased husband's brother. This phrase develops the Queen as a disrespectful or immoral character.

① Consider drawing students' attention to their application of standard L.11-12.4.c through the process of determining word meaning through the glossary in the explanatory notes.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** To scaffold student understanding of Hamlet's tone and the development of the Queen's character, instruct students to annotate lines 149–164 for words Hamlet uses in reference to the Queen or her actions.

- 🗨️ Students responses may include:
 - "within a month" (line 149)
 - "frailty" (line 150)
 - "a little month" (line 151)
 - "she followed my poor father's body" (line 152)
 - "like Niobe, all tears" (line 153)
 - "a beast that wants discourse of reason" (line 154)
 - "married with my / uncle" (lines 155–156)

- “unrighteous tears” (line 159)
- “wicked speed” and “dexterity” (lines 161–162)
- “incestuous sheets” (line 162)
- “it cannot come to good” (line 163)

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?

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.

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 Lesson 6, provide students with the following definition: *chastity* means “the state or quality of being chaste (i.e., refraining from sexual intercourse that is regarded as contrary to morality or religion).”

① Students may be familiar with this word. Consider asking students to volunteer a definition before providing one to the group.

- ▶ Students write the definition of *chastity* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

Instruct students to conduct a brief search for information about the meaning and role of *chastity* in Elizabethan England.

- ▶ Students follow along.

Homework

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

Also, conduct a brief search for information about the meaning and role of *chastity* in Elizabethan England.