

## 10.11

## Lesson 11

## Introduction

In this lesson, students begin to explore Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy, one of the best-known passages of English literature. Students read Act 3.1, lines 64–84 (from "To be or not to be—that is the question" to "might his quietus make / With a bare bodkin"), focusing on how Shakespeare's word choice impacts the meaning of the passage. Students pay attention to Shakespeare's use of beautiful and engaging language as they examine one of the central concerns of literature and the human experience. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: Analyze Hamlet's attitude toward life and death, noting Shakespeare's use of metaphor and language that is fresh, engaging, and beautiful.

For homework, students choose one of two homework options: either revisit Act 1.2, lines 136–138 of *Hamlet* and examine how Hamlet's statement is further developed in the soliloquy from today's lesson, or watch a brief video and explain how Shakespeare uses figurative language to develop central ideas.

## Standards

Assessed Standard(s)	
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)	
W.9-10.9.a	<p>Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.</p> <p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9.A</u>            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]").</p>
L.9-10.4.c	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.

	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, or its etymology.
L.9-10.5.a	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. a. Interpret figures of speech (e.g., euphemism, oxymoron) in context and analyze their role in the text.

## 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>Analyze Hamlet's attitude toward life and death, noting Shakespeare's use of metaphor and language that is fresh, engaging, and beautiful.</li> </ul>
High Performance Response(s)
<p>A High Performance Response should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze Hamlet's attitude toward life and death (e.g., The opening line of Hamlet's soliloquy "To be, or not to be—that is the question" (line 64) lays out Hamlet's central concern for the next 20 lines. Hamlet tries to decide whether or not life is worth living.).</li> <li>Cite specific instances of Shakespeare's use of metaphor and fresh, engaging, and beautiful language that demonstrate Hamlet's attitude toward life and death (e.g., Shakespeare's metaphor of death as a kind of "sleep" (lines 68, 73–74) demonstrates all of Hamlet's conflicted feelings about life and death. First, the sleep of death sounds relieving because death removes one from the "heartache and the thousand natural shocks" (line 70) of life. But then Hamlet realizes that "[t]o sleep" is "perchance to dream" (line 73), by which he means to die is to perhaps experience an afterlife. It is unclear to Hamlet how this afterlife will be, or "what dreams may come" (line 74) from the sleep of death. The uncertainty of the afterlife, for Hamlet, is "the rub" (line 73), or the mysterious obstacle that keeps one from knowing whether it is better to live or to die. Hamlet cannot decide whether it is better to live or die.).</li> </ul>

## Vocabulary

Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)
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- calamity (n.) – a great misfortune or disaster
- contumely (n.) – insulting display of contempt in words or actions; contemptuous or humiliating treatment

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

- consummation (n.) – condition that fulfills desires and aims
- rub (n.) – obstacle
- bare bodkin (n.) – a mere dagger; an unsheathed dagger

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

- heir (n.) – a person who has the legal right to receive the property of someone who dies
- coil (n.) – a long thin piece of material that is wound into circles
- pangs (n.) – sudden strong feelings of physical or emotional pain
- insolence (n.) – rudeness or impoliteness
- spurns (v.) – refuses to accept

## Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
<b>Standards &amp; Text:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standards: RL.9-10.4, W. 9-10.9.a, L. 9-10.4.c, L. 9-10.5.a</li> <li>• Text: <i>Hamlet</i> by William Shakespeare, Act 3.1: lines 64–84 (Masterful Reading: Act 3.1, lines 64–98)</li> </ul> <p>① In order to provide additional context, the masterful reading extends beyond the lines students read and discuss during the lesson.</p> <b>Learning Sequence:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda</li> <li>2. Discussion of Hamlet’s Character</li> <li>3. Masterful Reading</li> <li>4. Reading and Discussion</li> <li>5. Quick Write</li> <li>6. Closing</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 5%</li> <li>2. 5%</li> <li>3. 5%</li> <li>4. 70%</li> <li>5. 10%</li> <li>6. 5%</li> </ol>

## Materials

- Student copies of the Central Ideas Tracking Tool (refer to 11.1.2 Lesson 7)—students may need additional blank copies
- Student copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist (refer to 11.1.1 Lesson 1)
- Video: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/shakespeare-uncovered/video/hamlet-with-david-tennant/> (15:45–21:45)

## 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.
	<b>Bold text indicates text dependent questions.</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

5%

Begin by reviewing the agenda and the assessed standard for this lesson: RL. 9-10.4. In this lesson, students read the first part of Hamlet’s “To be or not to be” soliloquy, one of the best-known passages in English literature. After a brief whole-class discussion, students work in small groups discussing Shakespeare’s use of figurative language to demonstrate Hamlet’s attitude toward life and death.

- Students look at the agenda.

### Activity 2: Discussion of Hamlet’s Character

5%

Lead a brief discussion in which students share out some of their responses from the 11.1.2 Mid-Unit Assessment. Ask students what they know about Hamlet’s character through their reading so far.

- 💬 Student responses may include:
  - Hamlet has trouble making a decision about how to avenge his father’s death.
  - He is depressed.

- He is angry with his mother and uncle, and with the world in general.

### Activity 3: Masterful Reading

5%

Have students listen to a masterful reading of Act 3.1, lines 64–98 (from “To be or not to be—that is the question” to “Nymph, in thy orisons / Be all my sins remembered”). Ask students to listen for particularly 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 describe Hamlet’s view of life?**

### Activity 4: Reading and Discussion

70%

Instruct students to form groups. Post or project each set of questions below for students to discuss. Instruct students to annotate for figurative language regarding mortality. Remind students that annotating helps them to keep track of evidence they use for the lesson assessment.

- ① Consider drawing students’ attention to their application of standard W.11-12.9.a through drawing evidence from literary texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- ① Remind students to use the Central Ideas Tracking Tool to record central ideas they identify and discuss.

Instruct student groups to read Act 3.1, line 64 (“To be or not to be – that is the question”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

**Is Hamlet asking “the question” (line 64) in a personal or universal sense?**

- 💬 It is unclear whether Hamlet means “[t]o be or not to be” (line 64) in the personal or universal sense. Hamlet could be asking either “Is my life worth living?” or “Is life worth living in general?” For Hamlet, the question of whether to live or to die is “the question,” or the most important question there is.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Instruct student groups to read lines 65–68 (from “Whether ’tis nobler in the mind to suffer” to “And, by opposing, end them”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

**What does Hamlet mean by the “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” (line 66)?**

- ☞ The “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” (line 66) are the troubles or difficulties of life.

**What does Hamlet mean by “a sea of troubles” in line 67, and what does ending them mean?**

- ☞ With “a sea of troubles” Hamlet again describes what one suffers in life. To end them would mean making life’s troubles go away.
- ① Consider drawing students’ attention to their application of standard L.11-12.5.a through the process of interpreting figurative language.

**Summarize the problem Hamlet describes in lines 64–68.**

- ☞ In lines 64–68, Hamlet describes his doubt as to whether it is “nobler” to “suffer” the pains of life (line 65), or whether one should “oppos[e]” the suffering (line 68) and commit suicide, overcoming the “sea of troubles” (line 67). Hamlet does not know if life is worth living.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

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Read lines 68–72 with the class (from “To die, to sleep— / No more—and by a sleep” to “’tis a consummation / Devoutly to be wished”).

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the following definition: *heir* means “a person who has the legal right to receive the property of someone who dies.”
- ▶ Students write the definition of *heir* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

Direct students to the explanatory notes for the definition of the following word: *consummation*.

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

**How are death and sleep related to the problem Hamlet describes?**

- ☞ Hamlet supposes that “[t]o die” is “to sleep” (line 68). In sleep, troubles are “[n]o more” (line 69), because one is not awake for them. Sleep is a metaphor for death.
- ① Consider drawing students’ attention to their application of standard L.11-12.5.a through the process of interpreting figurative language.

**To what does Hamlet refer with the phrase “flesh is heir” (line 71)?**

- ☞ Hamlet refers to the “the heartache and the thousand natural shocks” (line 70), or the inevitable emotional and physical pains in life that all humans suffer.

**How do lines 70–71 relate to the phrases “outrageous fortune” (line 66) and “sea of troubles” (line 67)?**

- ☞ “The heartache and the thousand natural shocks / That the flesh is heir to” (lines 70–71) relate to the phrases “outrageous fortune” (line 66) and “sea of troubles” (line 67) by developing Hamlet’s view that life is full of suffering.

**To what “consummation” (line 71) does Hamlet refer?**

- ☞ The “consummation” Hamlet refers to is the “sleep of death” (line 74), and wishing it were true that death could end life’s troubles.

**What contrast has Hamlet set up in this soliloquy?**

- ☞ Hamlet has set up the contrast of suffering of life, or “the heartache and the thousand natural shocks” (line 70), versus the peace of death.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

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Instruct students to return to their groups and read lines 72–76 (from “To die, to sleep— / To sleep, perchance to dream” to “off this mortal coil / Must give us pause”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the following definition: *coil* means “a long thin piece of material that is wound into circles.”

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

Direct students to the explanatory notes for the definition of the following word: *rub*.

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

**What is Hamlet afraid will happen in the “sleep” (line 72) of death?**

- ☞ Hamlet is afraid that if “to die” is “to sleep” (line 72), then one may also “dream” (line 73), or experience a different kind of existence after death. Hamlet is worried about “what dreams may come” (line 74), or what life there is after death.

**What is “the rub” (line 73)?**

- 💬 “[T]he rub” is the unknown of what happens after death. It is a “rub,” or obstacle, because after death one might experience some other kind of existence. It is unknown if there is greater suffering after death, or if all suffering is “[n]o more” (line 69), as Hamlet states earlier in the soliloquy. Hamlet’s use of the phrase “the rub” implies that if the afterlife were certain, people would know whether it is better to live or to die.

**What is the effect of talking about death by using the phrase “shuffled off this mortal coil” (line 75)?**

- 💬 Student responses may include:
  - The phrase “shuffled off this mortal coil” makes death sound like the unwinding of life’s tense, or “coil[ed]” (line 75), difficulties.
  - The phrase “shuffled off this mortal coil” makes death sound like the removal of something temporary. The phrase likens life to something like clothing that can be “shuffled off.”

① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle with this question, direct them to the explanatory notes for an explanation of “shuffled off this mortal coil” (line 75).

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

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Instruct student groups to read lines 76–84 (from “There’s the respect / That makes calamity of so long life” to “might his quietus make / With a bare bodkin”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

Provide students with the following definitions: *calamity* means “a great misfortune or disaster” and *contumely* means “insulting display of contempt in words or actions; contemptuous or humiliating treatment.”

① Students may be familiar with these words. Consider asking students to volunteer definitions before providing them to the group.

- ▶ Students write the definitions of *calamity* and *contumely* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the following definitions: *pangs* means “sudden strong feelings of physical or emotional pain,” *insolence* means “rudeness or impoliteness,” and *spurns* means “refuses to accept.”

- ▶ Students write the definitions of *pangs*, *insolence*, and *spurns* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.



Direct students to the explanatory notes for the definitions of the following words: *bare bodkin*.

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

**Paraphrase lines 76–77: “There’s the respect / That makes calamity of so long life.”**

- ☞ Fear of death and fear of what comes after death make us choose life rather than killing ourselves.

**What do lines 76–77 suggest about Hamlet’s view of life?**

- ☞ Hamlet sees that what keeps someone from suicide is “respect” (line 76) or fear of what may or may not happen after one dies. People prolong their suffering in life because of this fear.

**How do the experiences that are listed in lines 78–82 (from “For who would bear the whips and scorns of time” to “the spurns / That patient merit of th’ unworthy takes”) support Hamlet’s statement: “There’s the respect / That makes calamity of so long life” (lines 76–77)?**

- ☞ Hamlet describes the bad experiences or “whips and scorns of time” (line 78) that people endure in “so long [a] life” because they are afraid to die.

**What does Hamlet mean by “When he himself might his quietus make / with bare bodkin” (lines 83–84)?**

- ☞ By “his quietus make” (line 83), Hamlet means “settle one’s account,” or ends one’s life. A “bare bodkin” (line 84) is an unsheathed dagger, so Hamlet means someone could settle his or her “account,” or end his or her life, with a dagger. In other words, Hamlet contemplates suicide in these lines.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

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Instruct students to return to their groups to discuss and review their annotations for figurative language. Inform students that they are to compile evidence collaboratively to prepare them for the Quick Write prompt: Analyze Hamlet’s attitude toward life and death, noting Shakespeare’s specific use of metaphor and language that is fresh, engaging, and beautiful.

- ☞ Student responses may include:
  - Hamlet talks about life as a “mortal coil” (line 75) to be shed.
  - Hamlet references “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” (line 66) and the “sea of troubles” (line 67) to show how horrible and unfair he thinks life is.

- Hamlet calls life a “calamity” (line 77).
- Hamlet thinks of death as “sleep” (lines 68, 73–74) but worries about dreams, or what might happen after death.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

## Activity 5: Quick Write

10%

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

**Analyze Hamlet’s attitude toward life and death, noting Shakespeare’s use of metaphor and language that is fresh, engaging, and beautiful.**

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 11.1.2 Lesson 12 requires students to reference their Quick Writes from this lesson for evidence of Hamlet’s views on death.

## Activity 6: Closing

5%

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to choose one of two homework options.

Option 1: Reread Act 1.2, lines 136–138, in which Hamlet says “O God, God, / How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable / Seem to me all the uses of this world,” and examine how this statement is further developed in Act 3.1, lines 64–84 (from “To be or not to be – that is the question” to “might his quietus make / With a bare bodkin”).

Option 2: Watch a brief video ([www.pbs.org/wnet/shakespeare-uncovered/video/hamlet-with-david-tennant/](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/shakespeare-uncovered/video/hamlet-with-david-tennant/), 15:45–21:45) and, based on the video, explain how Shakespeare uses figurative language to develop central ideas.

## Homework

Choose one of the two following homework options.

Option 1: Reread Act 1.2, lines 136–138, in which Hamlet says “O God, God, / How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable / Seem to me all the uses of this world” and examine how this statement is further developed in Act 3.1, lines 64–84 (from “To be or not to be – that is the question” to “might his quietus make / With a bare bodkin”).

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## Model Central Ideas Tracking Tool

<b>Name:</b>		<b>Class:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
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**Directions:** As you read, record evidence of central ideas as well as explanations of how the evidence is connected and/or demonstrates the development of the central ideas in the text.

<b>Text:</b>	<i>Hamlet</i> by William Shakespeare
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Act/Scene/ Line #	Central Ideas	Evidence, Connections, and Development
Act 3.1, lines 64–68	Mortality	Hamlet begins the soliloquy by asking “To be or not to be[?]” (line 64) and ponders on whether it is better to live and suffer or to oppose life’s “sea of troubles” (line 67) and take one’s own life.
Act 3.1, lines 68–74	Mortality	Shakespeare uses the image of sleep and dreaming to develop the central idea of mortality. Hamlet imagines death as sleep: “To die, to sleep,” and the afterlife as a dream: “To die, to sleep— / To sleep, perchance to dream. Ay, there’s the rub / For in that sleep of death what dreams may come” (lines 68–74) in order to debate the merits of suicide and the possibilities of the afterlife.
Act 3.1, line 75	Mortality	With the image of “this mortal coil” (line 75), Shakespeare develops the central idea of mortality: Hamlet considers life as a constraint, which a man can “shuffle[] off” (line 75) by death.
Act 3.1, lines 76–84	Mortality	Hamlet considers that if there was guaranteed peace in death, that people would “quietus make” (line 83), or settle their account, by killing themselves with a dagger.