

10.18

Lesson 18

Introduction

In this lesson, students listen to a masterful reading of Act 4.4, lines 1–69 (from “Go, Captain, from me greet the Danish king” to “My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth!”), and then analyze Hamlet’s final soliloquy in lines 34–56, in which he resolves to act on his vengeful thoughts. Students note how Shakespeare continues to develop Hamlet’s character in this passage, paying particular attention to the use of comparisons and Fortinbras’s role as a foil for Hamlet. Students first read closely for comprehension and then work in pairs to consider larger ideas developed in this soliloquy that relate to Hamlet’s character. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: How does the comparison of Hamlet to Fortinbras develop Hamlet’s character?

For homework, students reread Act 4.4, lines 34–69 of *Hamlet* (from “How all occasions do inform against me” to “My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth!”) and paraphrase lines 56–69.

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)	
SL.9-10.1.a-d	<p>Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</p> <p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.A</u> Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.</p> <p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.B</u> 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),</p>

	<p>clear goals and deadlines, and individual roles as needed.</p> <p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.C</u> Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.</p> <p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.D</u> Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.</p>
L.9-10.5.b	<p>Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.</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 does the comparison of Hamlet to Fortinbras develop Hamlet’s character?
High Performance Response(s)
<p>A High Performance Response should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify an important aspect of Hamlet’s character (e.g., Hamlet’s indecisiveness, Hamlet’s self-pity, Hamlet’s concern with his own cowardice, etc.). Discuss the relationship of Hamlet’s character to Fortinbras (e.g., Fortinbras acts as a foil that emphasizes Hamlet’s self-pity, indecisiveness, and his concern with cowardice. Hamlet spends his monologue comparing himself to Fortinbras. Hamlet laments that while Fortinbras marches on Poland to avenge his father’s death, Hamlet has done nothing to avenge his own father’s death even though Hamlet has the “cause, and will, and strength, and means” (line 48) to kill Claudius. Hamlet, unlike Fortinbras, has been indecisive about avenging his father’s death, either because of mindlessness, or “craven scruple” (line 42), the cowardice brought on by thinking too much. Hamlet’s concern for his cowardice stands in stark contrast to Fortinbras’s willingness to risk so much for land as big and important as “an eggshell” (line 56).).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> exhort (v.) – to urge, advise, or caution earnestly
Vocabulary to teach (may include direct word work and/or questions)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> dull (adj.) – not sharp; blunt
Additional vocabulary to support English Language Learners (to provide directly)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> occasions (n.) – particular times, especially as marked by certain circumstances or occurrences capability (n.) – the ability to do something puffed (adj.) – made larger than normal

Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
Standards & Text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards: RL.9-10.3, SL. 9-10.1.a-e, L. 9-10.5.b Text: <i>Hamlet</i> by William Shakespeare, Act 4.4: lines 34–56 (Masterful Reading: Act 4.4: lines 1–69) <p>📘 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. Small Group Discussion 6. Quick Write 7. Closing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 5% 2. 15% 3. 5% 4. 45% 5. 15% 6. 10% 7. 5%

Materials

- Free audio resource: <https://librivox.org/hamlet-by-william-shakespeare/> (8:25–12:52)

- Student copies of the Character Tracking Tool (refer to 11.1.2 Lesson 3)—students may need additional blank copies
- 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 11.1 Speaking and Listening Rubric and Checklist (refer to 11.1.2 Lesson 7)
- Student copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist (refer to 11.1.1 Lesson 1)
- Copies of the Paraphrase Tool 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 text dependent questions.
	<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. 9-10.3. In this lesson, students listen to a masterful reading of the soliloquy. Students analyze the first half of the soliloquy through a whole-class discussion before working in small groups to examine how Shakespeare develops Hamlet’s character in this passage.

- ▶ Students look at the agenda.

Activity 2: Homework Accountability

15%

Instruct students to take out their responses to the first part of the previous lesson’s homework assignment. (Review the *Dramatis Personae* or “Character List,” Act 1.1, lines 1–190, and your notes and annotations from 11.1.2 Lesson 1 in order to gather information about the character of Fortinbras.) Instruct students to form pairs to discuss and share their homework responses.

- 💬 Student responses may include:

- In the *Dramatis Personae*, Fortinbras is referred to as the Prince of Norway.
- In lines 91–119, Horatio explains that Fortinbras’s father died in a battle against Denmark. The battle ended with Denmark gaining land from Norway.
- In these lines, Horatio describes Fortinbras as being “Of unimprovèd mettle hot and full” (Act 1.1, line 108) and explains that Fortinbras is preparing for a battle against Poland.

Instruct students to take out their responses to the second part of the previous lesson’s homework assignment. (Reread Act 3.4, lines 1–240 and use the Central Ideas Tracking Tool to track the development of central ideas. Then respond briefly in writing to the following prompt: Identify a central idea from the play and explain how it is further developed in this scene.) Instruct student pairs to discuss their homework responses.

Identify a central idea from the play and explain how it is further developed in this scene.

🗨 See the Model Central Ideas Tracking Tool at the end of this lesson.

Activity 3: Masterful Reading

5%

Have students listen to a masterful reading of Act 4.4, lines 1–69 (from “Go, Captain, from me greet the Danish king” to “My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth!”). As students listen, ask them to note the comparisons Hamlet makes in the soliloquy.

- ▶ 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 audience learn about Hamlet by comparing him to Fortinbras?

Activity 4: Reading and Discussion

45%

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 Remind students to use the Character Tracking Tool and the Central Ideas Tracking Tool to record character development and central ideas they identify and discuss.

Instruct student pairs to read Act 4.4, lines 34–49 (from “How all occasions do inform against me” to “Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means / To do ’t”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the following definitions: *occasions* means “particular times, especially as marked by certain circumstances or occurrences” and *capability* means “the ability to do something.”

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

What does the word *dull* mean at the beginning of the soliloquy (line 35)? In what ways is Hamlet’s revenge *dull*?

- 💬 *Dull* means “not sharp; blunt.” Hamlet’s revenge is harmless, like a “dull” knife, because he has not yet killed Claudius.

- ① Consider drawing students’ attention to their application of standard L.11-12.5.b through the process of analyzing nuances of word meanings.

To what “occasions” does Hamlet refer in line 34: “How all occasions do inform against me”?

- 💬 Student responses may include:

- Hamlet has accidentally killed Polonius instead of Claudius.
- Hamlet is being sent to England, where he will not be able to kill Claudius and where Claudius plans to have Hamlet killed.
- Hamlet sees Fortinbras marching an army toward Poland.

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle with this question, consider asking them to recount what important events happened before Hamlet began the soliloquy.

What effect do these “occasions” (line 34) have on Hamlet?

- 💬 The “occasions” suggest that Hamlet is not doing enough to avenge his father’s death.

What comparison does Hamlet make in lines 35–37? How does this comparison relate to Hamlet’s current situation?

- 💬 Hamlet compares a person who only “sleep[s] and feed[s]” (line 37) to a beast. He makes the comparison to show that people should do more than just meet their basic needs. In other words, Hamlet should do more than just sleep and eat; he should avenge his father’s death.

What comparison does Hamlet make in lines 38–41? How does this comparison relate to Hamlet’s current situation?

- 🗨️ Hamlet compares reason to a quality of the gods by describing it as “godlike” (line 40). Hamlet makes this comparison to show that people should use their reason in order to live a life that is more meaningful than a basic, animal life. In other words, Hamlet should use his reason to live rather than living like an unthinking animal.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle with this question, consider directing them to the explanatory notes for an explanation of lines 38–39.

How does Shakespeare develop Hamlet’s character in lines 33–41?

- 🗨️ Student responses may include:
 - Shakespeare shows that Hamlet wants to do more than live a very basic life where he is only concerned with “sleep[ing] and feed[ing]” (line 37).
 - Shakespeare shows that Hamlet wants to use “godlike reason” (line 40) to find meaning in life and to make moral decisions.
 - Shakespeare shows that Hamlet’s indecision is causing him to “fust” (line 41), or molder, with inaction, which causes Hamlet to question what kind of life he is leading.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle with this question, consider directing them to the explanatory notes for an explanation of the word “fust.”

What two possible reasons does Hamlet give in line 42 for not having made a decision?

- 🗨️ Hamlet says he might not have decided because of “[b]estial oblivion,” or mindlessness, or a “craven scruple” (line 42), meaning cowardice.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle with this question, consider directing them to the explanatory notes for explanations of the phrases “bestial oblivion” and “craven scruple.”

Hamlet describes his lack of action as “but one part / wisdom / And ever three parts coward” in lines 44–46. What does this phrase reveal about Hamlet’s character in relation to the central idea of revenge?

- 🗨️ Student responses may include:
 - Hamlet believes he uses “thinking too precisely” (line 43), or thinking too much, as an excuse because he is afraid of killing Claudius in revenge, which keeps Hamlet inactive.
 - Hamlet accuses himself of being a “coward” (line 46) here, as he has elsewhere, for his failure to avenge his father’s death.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Instruct student pairs to reread lines 49–56 (from “Examples gross as Earth exhort me” to “To all that fortune, death, and danger dare, / Even for an eggshell”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

Provide students with the following definition: *exhort* means “to urge, advise, or caution earnestly.”

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 *exhort* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the following definition: *puffed* means “made larger than normal.”

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

What are the “[e]xamples” to which Hamlet refers and, according to Hamlet, what do they “exhort” (line 49) him to do?

💬 The examples are the soldiers led by Fortinbras, the “delicate and tender prince” (line 51). They “exhort” Hamlet to take action to avenge his father’s death by murdering Claudius.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle with this question, consider directing them to the explanatory notes for an explanation of the phrase “gross as Earth.”

Who is the “delicate and tender prince” to whom Hamlet refers in line 51?

💬 Hamlet refers to Fortinbras as the “delicate and tender prince”.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle with this question, consider reminding them of the work they did reviewing information about Fortinbras for the previous lesson’s homework.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Activity 5: Small Group Discussion

15%

Instruct students to form small groups and gather their text, notes, and annotations to prepare for a small group discussion.

① Consider reminding students that this is an opportunity to work with standard SL.11-12.1.a-e. Direct students to their copies of the 11.1 Speaking and Listening Rubric and Checklist as necessary.

Post or project the following discussion prompts or provide hard copies to each student group.

How does Hamlet describe Fortinbras, his actions, and his goals in lines 50–56 (from “Witness this army of such mass and charge” to “To all that fortune, death, and danger dare, / Even for an eggshell”)?

🗨 Student responses may include:

- Hamlet describes Fortinbras as a “delicate and tender prince” (line 51).
- Hamlet describes Fortinbras as “with divine ambition puffed” (line 52), which means Fortinbras is very ambitious and determined.
- Hamlet says Fortinbras “makes mouths” (line 53), or makes faces, at his likely death.
- Hamlet describes the piece of land Fortinbras hopes to acquire as “an eggshell” (line 56), or as a very small piece of otherwise unimportant land.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle with this question, consider directing them to the explanatory notes for an explanation of the phrase “make mouths at.”

How do these descriptions reveal Hamlet’s attitude toward Fortinbras?

🗨 Student responses may include:

- Hamlet’s words reveal that he admires Fortinbras in some ways. Hamlet says, “Witness this army of such mass and charge” (line 50), revealing that he is impressed by Fortinbras’s ability to act and command an entire army.
- Hamlet seems to admire Fortinbras’s courage when he says that Fortinbras is “Exposing what is mortal and unsure / To all that fortune, death, and danger dare” (lines 54–55).

① Fortinbras is an ambiguous character, so students may have a range of responses. Students’ interpretations of Fortinbras shape their interpretations of Hamlet’s choice to model himself after Fortinbras.

① Consider drawing students’ attention to their application of standard RL.11-12.1 through the recognition that Fortinbras’s character is an example of where the text leaves matters uncertain.

① Consider drawing students’ attention to the alliteration in this phrase as an example of beautiful language. If time permits, ask students to volunteer additional examples of beautiful language in lines 34–56, and explain why the language is beautiful.

How does Shakespeare develop Hamlet’s character in the lines describing Fortinbras?

🗨 Shakespeare uses Hamlet’s discussion of Fortinbras to demonstrate Hamlet’s self-pity. Hamlet sees Fortinbras’s current march as an “occasion[]” that “inform[s] against” (line 34) him, making it clear to Hamlet that if even Fortinbras can take action to gain a small piece of land that is no more than “an eggshell” (line 56), then Hamlet should be able to take action to accomplish something large and important like avenging his father’s death. Hamlet remarks that he has “a

father killed, a mother stained” (line 60), but he has not done as much as Fortinbras has for his cause.

Explain that a *foil* is a literary device in which one character is used to emphasize particular qualities of another character (usually the main character) through contrast. Instruct students to record this definition in their notes.

How is Fortinbras a *foil* for Hamlet?

Student responses may include:

- Fortinbras is a foil for Hamlet because both men are princes seeking to avenge their fathers’ deaths. Hamlet wants to avenge his father’s murder. Fortinbras wants to avenge his father’s death and loss of territory in Poland.
- Hamlet has not made a clear plan to avenge his father’s death and has accidentally killed Polonius. Fortinbras marches on Poland and is risking the lives of his men to reach his goal.
- Fortinbras is rash and acts boldly, but Hamlet is cautious and spends a lot of time thinking.
- Hamlet has “cause, and will, and strength, and means” to act (line 48), but does not do so, while Fortinbras does not have as great a cause, but uses his will and strength and means to act.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion about how Fortinbras as a foil for Hamlet has developed their understanding of Hamlet’s character.

① Consider having students use the 11.1 Speaking and Listening Rubric and Checklist for an informal self-evaluation after completing the discussion.

Activity 6: Quick Write

10%

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

How does the comparison of Hamlet to Fortinbras develop Hamlet’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 7: Closing

5%

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to reread Hamlet's last soliloquy, Act 4.4, lines 34–69 (from “How all occasions do inform against me” to “My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth!”) and paraphrase lines 56–69 (from “Rightly to be great / Is not to stir without great argument” to “My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth!”).

① Consider giving students the Paraphrase Tool to scaffold the homework activity.

- ▶ Students follow along.

Homework

Reread Hamlet's last soliloquy, Act 4.4, lines 34–69 (from “How all occasions do inform against me” to “My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth!”) and paraphrase lines 56–69 (from “Rightly to be great / Is not to stir without great argument” to “My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth!”).

Model Character Tracking Tool

Name:		Class:		Date:	
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Directions: Use this tool to keep track of character development throughout the module. Trace character development in the texts by noting how the author introduces and develops characters. Cite textual evidence to support your work.

Text:	<i>Hamlet</i> by William Shakespeare
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Character	Trait	Evidence
Hamlet	Self-pitying	Hamlet laments that while Fortinbras marches on Poland to avenge his father's death, Hamlet has done nothing to avenge his own father's death, though Hamlet has the "cause, and will, and strength, and means" to do so (line 48).
	Cowardly	Hamlet's concern for his cowardice stands in stark contrast to Fortinbras's willingness to risk so much for land as big and important as "an eggshell" (line 56).
	Indecisive	Hamlet, unlike Fortinbras, has been indecisive about avenging his father's death, either because of mindlessness or "craven scruple" (line 42), or the cowardice brought on by thinking too much.

Model Central Ideas Tracking Tool

Name:		Class:		Date:	
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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.

Text:	<i>Hamlet</i> by William Shakespeare
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Act/Scene/ Line #	Central Ideas	Evidence, Connections, and Development
Act 3.4, lines 83–86	Madness	Hamlet tells Gertrude that even if all of her senses were “thrilled” (line 84) by madness she would have had the choice to refrain from marrying Claudius.
Act 3.4, line 121	Madness	When Hamlet sees the Ghost, Gertrude says that “he’s mad” (line 121) because she does not see it.
Act 3.4, lines 133–141	Madness	Gertrude wants to know how Hamlet can “bend [his] eye on vacancy” and speak to “th’ incorporeal air” (lines 134–135). Gertrude sees that Hamlet’s hairs are standing on end, which indicates that he truly believes he sees something, though to her there is nothing there.
Act 3.4, lines 157–160	Madness	Gertrude states that the “ecstasy” (line 158), or madness, that allows Hamlet to see the Ghost is the “very coinage of [his] brain” (line 157), or is a fabrication of his brain.
Act 3.4, lines 162–167	Madness	Hamlet does not believe he is mad. He says, “It is not madness / That I have uttered” (lines 162–163). He challenges Gertrude to ask him to repeat everything he has just seen and said, which a madman could not do. He tells her not to flatter herself that it is his madness and not her “trespass” (line 167), or crime, that makes her unable to see the Ghost.

Act 4.4, lines 42–43	Action vs. inaction	Hamlet believes he uses “thinking too precisely” (line 44), or thinking too much, as an excuse because he is afraid of killing Claudius in revenge, which keeps Hamlet inactive. Fortinbras, on the other hand, has already taken action and marches on Poland.
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Paraphrase Tool

Name:		Class:		Date:	
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Directions: Read the text in the second column. Write a paraphrase of the text in your own words in the third column. While paraphrasing or discussing, record any notes about the text in the fourth column.

Lines	Shakespeare's Language	Paraphrase	Notes
Act 4.4, lines 56–59	Rightly to be great / Is not to stir without great argument, / But greatly to find quarrel in a straw / When honor's at the stake.		
Act 4.4, lines 59–62	How stand I, then, / That have a father killed, a mother stained, / Excitements of my reason and my blood, / And let all sleep,		
Act 4.4, lines 62–68	while to my shame I see / The imminent death of twenty thousand men / That for a fantasy and trick of fame / Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot / Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause, / Which is not tomb enough and continent / To hide the slain?		
Act 4.4, lines 68–69	O, from this time forth / My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth!		