



**Literacy Design  
Collaborative**

# TO BE OR NOT TO BE: The Evolution of Hamlet's Personality

★ TASK ★ LADDER

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This is a capstone English Language Arts module that involves reading the entire play but with a focus on two short, profound excerpts: Hamlet's soliloquy in Act III, Scene 1 ("To be or not to be...") compared with his soliloquy in Act IV, Scene 4 ("How all occasions do inform against me...").

This module can be taught either through a reading of the entire play (with a seminar and writing focus on the two soliloquies) or by a close reading of just these two passages.

The module as it is written contains reading strategies for attacking the entire play, as well as more detailed strategies for a close reading of these two excerpts.

In either case, the seminar text for this module consists of these two soliloquies, and the writing task asks students for a closely reasoned comparison of the two.

NOTE: This module is designed to teach and assess the Core Content College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards identified in the LDC standards as well as those for "Speaking and Listening" including a formal and rigorous dialogue about concepts and ideas. Common Core "Reading" and "Writing" standards are practiced and assessed around the Paideia Seminar discussion. If you are not trained in leading Paideia (Socratic) Seminars, you can still teach this module by replacing the Seminar in Cluster 3 with another discussion-based strategy. In addition to this module, you will need the LDC/Paideia Packet.

The focus standards for this module are:

- 1: SL11-12:1 Participate in discussions building on other's ideas and presenting their own.
- 2: RL11-12:3 Analyze and explain how specific characters develop over the course of a text.
3. W11-12:2 Write explanatory texts.

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GRADES	DISCIPLINE	COURSE	PACING
11 - 12	 ELA	 Junior/Senior English	 N/A

# Section 1: What Task?

## Teaching Task

### Task Template 23 - Informational or Explanatory

How does Hamlet's personality evolve during the course of the play? After reading two of Hamlet's soliloquies (in Act III, Scene 1 and Act IV, Scene 4), write an essay in which you compare his state of mind early in the play to his state of mind late in the play. Support your discussion with evidence from the text(s).

## Standards

### Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

#### RI.11-12.3

Focus

Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

#### W.11-12.2

Focus

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.


#### SL.11-12.1


Focus


Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11—12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

## Texts

### Soliloquies from "Hamlet" (can also use the entire play)

 How to Read a Book, Mortimer Adler and Charles van Doren  
Teacher Resource (also used in Reading Process)

 Teaching Thinking Through Dialogue, Terry Roberts and Laura Billings  
Teacher Resource

 Teaching Thinking Through Dialogue (2nd Edition, National Paideia Center)  
Teacher Resource

**Student Work Rubric - Informational or Explanatory Task - Grades 9-12**

	Emerging	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Advanced
	1	2	3	4
<b>Controlling Idea</b>	Presents a general or unclear controlling idea.	Presents a <b>clear</b> controlling idea <b>that addresses the prompt</b> , with an <b>uneven focus</b> .	Presents <b>and maintains a clear, specific</b> controlling idea that addresses <b>all aspects</b> of the prompt and <b>takes into account the complexity of the topic</b> .	Presents and maintains a <b>precise, substantive</b> controlling idea that addresses all aspects of the prompt, <b>takes into account the complexity of the topic</b> and, where appropriate, <b>acknowledges gaps in evidence or information</b> .
<b>Selection &amp; Citation of Evidence</b>	Includes minimal details from sources. Sources are used without citation.	Includes <b>details, examples, and/or quotations</b> from sources that are <b>relevant to the controlling idea</b> . <b>Inconsistently</b> cites sources.	Includes details, examples, and/or quotations from sources that <b>support the controlling and supporting ideas</b> . <b>Consistently</b> cites sources <b>with minor formatting errors</b> .	Includes <b>well-chosen</b> details, examples, and/or quotations from sources that <b>fully support</b> the controlling and supporting ideas. <b>Consistently</b> cites sources <b>using appropriate format</b> .
<b>Development / Explanation of Sources</b>	Explanation of ideas and source material is irrelevant, incomplete, or inaccurate.	Explains ideas and source material <b>to support the controlling idea</b> , with <b>some incomplete reasoning or explanations</b> .	<b>Accurately</b> explains ideas and source material and <b>how they support</b> the controlling idea.	<b>Thoroughly</b> and accurately explains ideas and source material <b>to support and develop</b> the controlling idea.
<b>Organization</b>	Lacks an evident structure. Makes unclear connections among ideas, concepts, and information.	<b>Groups ideas and uses transitions</b> to develop the controlling idea, with <b>some lapses in coherence or organization</b> .	<b>Groups and sequences</b> ideas to <b>develop a cohesive explanation</b> . Uses transitions to <b>clarify the relationships among complex ideas, concepts, and information</b> .	Groups and sequences ideas <b>in a logical progression in which ideas build to create a unified whole</b> . Uses <b>varied</b> transitions to clarify the <b>precise</b> relationships among complex ideas, concepts, and information.
<b>Conventions</b>	Major errors in standard English conventions interfere with the clarity of the writing. Language or tone is inappropriate.	Errors in standard English conventions <b>sometimes interfere</b> with the clarity of the writing. Uses language and tone that are <b>sometimes inappropriate</b> for the audience and purpose.	<b>Consistently applies</b> standard English conventions; <b>minor errors</b> , while noticeable, <b>do not interfere</b> with the clarity of the writing. Uses language and tone <b>appropriate to the audience and purpose</b> .	Consistently applies standard English conventions, <b>with few errors</b> . Demonstrates <b>varied syntax and precise word choice</b> . <b>Consistently</b> uses language and tone appropriate to the audience and purpose.
<b>Content Understanding (Generic)</b>	Attempts to include disciplinary content in explanation or argument but understanding of content is weak; content is irrelevant, inappropriate, or inaccurate.	Briefly notes disciplinary content relevant to the prompt; shows basic or uneven understanding of content; minor errors in explanation.	Accurately presents disciplinary content relevant to the prompt with sufficient explanations that demonstrate understanding.	Integrates relevant and accurate disciplinary content with thorough explanations that demonstrate in-depth understanding.

## ***Background for Students***

*Hamlet*, written around 1600 by William Shakespeare, is probably the best-known play in the world. It is a revenge tragedy, in which the main character, young Prince Hamlet, is required by the ghost of his murdered father to take revenge on the murderer, who happens to be Hamlet's Uncle Claudius, who not only murdered Hamlet's father but then also married his mother, thereby taking control of the throne of Denmark. The play is based on a number of early histories of Denmark as well as an earlier English version of the story, which Shakespeare would have seen performed on stage. The play itself is full of mystery, and we in the audience watch Hamlet search throughout for the truth—not only the truth of what happened to his father but also the truth at the heart of the human condition in general and his own troubled personality in particular. During our study of the play, we will consider a number of profound ideas, including: ACTION vs. REFLECTION, COURAGE, FATE, and TRUTH.

## ***Extension***

(Mandatory in Paideia modules) Participate in the publication of an anthology of student essays on *Hamlet*, copies of which are available for circulation both in the classroom and the school media center. This anthology will contain each student's essay in its final revised and edited form, with an introduction by the teacher. Note that this collection needs to be available in multiple copies, as it will serve as a source of exemplars for students who write similar assignments (Informational or Explanatory/Comparison) in succeeding years.

## *Section 2: What Skills?*

### ***Preparing for the Task***

**TASK AND RUBRIC ANALYSIS > TASK ANALYSIS:** Ability to understand and explain the task's prompt and rubric.

### ***Reading Process***

**INSPECTIONAL READING :** Ability to identify structural components of the seminar text.

**ESSENTIAL VOCABULARY:** Ability to identify and master terms essential to understanding a text.

**ANALYTICAL READING:** Ability to annotate demanding text in detail.

### ***Dialogue Process (Paideia Seminar)***

**PRE-SEMINAR PROCESS:** Ability to reflect on personal communication habits and select appropriate speaking and listening goals.

**SEMINAR:** Ability to think critically and collaboratively in a group about concepts and ideas of a text through a structured Socratic seminar or other discussion-based strategy.

**POST-SEMINAR PROCESS:** Ability to self-assess on speaking and listening skills practiced in the seminar and note relevant communication goals for future discussions.

**CAPTURING IDEAS FROM DISCUSSION:** Ability to capture in writing the ideas (and words used to name and discuss ideas) from the seminar discussion.

### ***Writing Process***

**NOTE-TAKING:** Ability to select important facts and passages for use in one's own writing.

**INITIATING THE TASK (CONTROLLING IDEA):** Ability to establish a controlling idea and consolidate information relevant to task.

**PLANNING:** Ability to develop a line of thought and text structure appropriate to an argumentation task.

**INITIAL DRAFT & DEVELOPMENT:** Ability to construct an initial draft with an emerging line of thought and structure.

**REVISION:** Ability to refine text, including line of thought, language usage, and tone as appropriate to audience and purpose.

**EDITING:** Ability to proofread and format a piece to make it more effective.

**COMPLETION:** Ability to submit final work that is on task.

## Section 3: What Instruction?

PACING	SKILL AND DEFINITION	PRODUCT AND PROMPT	SCORING GUIDE	INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES
<b>Preparing for the Task</b>				
15 mins	<b>TASK AND RUBRIC ANALYSIS &gt; TASK ANALYSIS:</b> Ability to understand and explain the task's prompt and rubric.	<b>BULLETS</b> <i>In your own words, what are the important features of a good response to this prompt?</i>	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share examples of types of compositions students will produce (either from past students or from professional writers).</li> <li>Identify or invite students to identify key features of examples.</li> <li>Pair students to share and improve their individual bullets.</li> <li>Create a classroom list: Choose one student to share a few ideas on the board, and ask others to add to it.</li> </ul>
<b>Reading Process</b>				
1 hr and 30 mins	<b>INSPECTIONAL READING:</b> Ability to identify structural components of the seminar text.	<b>LABELING TEXT AND PARAPHRASING</b> <i>Label parts of the text by numbering the lines of the two texts. Discuss where they two soliloquies appear in the play.</i>	Structural features of the text are visible and clear.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each student has a copy of the printed text. <b>Hamlet Soliloquies</b></li> <li>Read the two soliloquies aloud for students.</li> <li>Remind students where these two soliloquies appear in the play and discuss in particular the setting of the two scenes (Act III, Scene 1 and Act IV, Scene 4) where these speeches appear.</li> <li>See Adler &amp; Van Doren, pp. 31-44.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to Read a Book, Mortimer Adler and Charles van Doren</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Note on pacing: This will be on-going as the text is read (which will take 1-3 class periods)</p>
Not provided	<b>ESSENTIAL VOCABULARY:</b> Ability to identify and master terms essential to understanding a text.	<b>VOCABULARY LIST</b> <i>In your notebook, list words and phrases essential to the texts. Add definitions, and (if appropriate) notes on connotation in this context.</i>  <i>In addition to the terms from the text, also list and define the following:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tragedy</li> <li>Act</li> <li>Scene</li> <li>Soliloquy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lists appropriate phrases.</li> <li>Provides accurate definitions.</li> </ul>	<p>**This will be on-going throughout the reading process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read the text aloud a second time while students highlight the words and phrases with which they are unfamiliar. Discuss the two soliloquies line by line, defining terms while students take notes on their initial copies of the text—for transfer into their notebooks.</li> <li>After scoring, ask some students to share definitions of terms that others overlooked or misunderstood.</li> <li>After scoring, be willing to provide direct instruction or guide a close reading if needed to work through a key phrase most students missed.</li> </ul>
1 hr	<b>ANALYTICAL READING:</b> Ability to annotate demanding text in detail.	<b>MARKED TEXT</b> <i>Using the two-column version of the text provided by the teacher, work in groups of three to annotate your personal copy of the text with paraphrases for difficult</i>	Annotates texts in detail—including paraphrase of individual lines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project on the board or screen a set of footnotes from a standard version of the text (of your choice) so that students will have a starting place with antique words or phrases.</li> <li>Assign groups of three to work through both texts line-by-line, writing clear paraphrases of any lines that are confusing to the students in each group.</li> <li>After all groups are finished, discuss both texts line</li> </ul>

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		<p>passages.</p> <p>After your group has finished annotating both texts, participate in class discussion of annotations.</p>		<p>by line, having groups share their paraphrases; discuss as necessary for clarity.</p>
<b>Dialogue Process (Paideia Seminar)</b>				
20 mins	<p><b>PRE-SEMINAR PROCESS:</b> Ability to reflect on personal communication habits and select appropriate speaking and listening goals.</p>	<p><b>SELF-ASSESSMENT</b></p> <p>Based on the list of Speaking and Listening behaviors, note in writing a goal for your personal participation in the upcoming dialogue.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chooses appropriate individual process goal based on past seminar performance.</li> </ul>	<p>Teacher should use the Speaking and Listening Skills List to facilitate individual process goal choice. Students select what they will work on individually and note it in writing on the Speaking and Listening Skills List included in the Appendices to this module. The group participation goal is discussed and posted where all can see. <b>Paideia Rubric</b></p>
	<p>Additional Attachments:</p> <p><a href="#">🔗 Paideia Homepage</a></p>			
40 mins	<p><b>SEMINAR:</b> Ability to think critically and collaboratively in a group about concepts and ideas of a text through a structured Socratic seminar or other discussion-based strategy.</p>	<p><b>SEMINAR PARTICIPATION</b></p> <p>Participate in the Seminar and focus on your goals.</p>	<p>Score with Paideia Rubric</p>	<p>Teachers should be familiar with the Process step of Paideia Seminar including: definition and purpose for having the dialogue, role and responsibility of facilitator and participants, steps to guide personal and group process goals.</p> <p>Also see Teaching Thinking Through Dialogue for examples of pre- and post-seminar process “scripts” embedded in sample seminar plans.</p> <p><b>Hamlet Seminar Plan</b></p>
20 mins	<p><b>POST-SEMINAR PROCESS:</b> Ability to self-assess on speaking and listening skills practiced in the seminar and note relevant communication goals for future discussions.</p>	<p><b>SELF-ASSESSMENT</b></p> <p>Reflect back on your participation goal, then finish filling out the Seminar Process Assessment form; write a short reflective work on your seminar performance in detail.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Answers task by filing in Speaking and Listening Skills List in detail. <b>Speaking and Listening Checklist</b></li> <li>Writes in detail about seminar participation</li> </ul>	<p>Have a few representative students share their goal for speaking and listening and their performance. Likewise, may ask the entire goal to reflect on the entire dialogue process, i.e. the group effort.</p> <p>In whatever format is preferred, both individual and group reflections should be archived for reference at the beginning of the next Seminar.</p> <p>See Teaching Thinking through Dialogue: pages 44-48.</p>
15 mins	<p><b>CAPTURING IDEAS FROM DISCUSSION:</b></p> <p>Ability to capture in writing the ideas (and words used to name and discuss ideas) from the seminar discussion.</p>	<p><b>SHORT RESPONSE</b></p> <p>In a quick write, note things you heard, said, or thought during the seminar that are in any way related to the writing task.</p>	<p>No scoring</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Link this task to earlier class content.</li> <li>Remind students that these notes will feed directly into the writing process.</li> <li>Clarify timetable and support plans for the task</li> </ul>
<b>Writing Process</b>				
40 mins	<p><b>NOTE-TAKING:</b> Ability to select important facts and passages for use in one's own</p>	<p><b>NOTES</b></p> <p>From each text, make a list of the elements that look most important for</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies relevant elements.</li> <li>Includes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teach a model format for note taking.</li> <li>Check that early student work is in the assigned format (or in another format that gathers the needed information effectively).</li> </ul>



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	writing.	<i>answering the prompt. Do what you need to do to avoid plagiarism.</i>  <i>Note in particular quotes that you can use to illustrate your response to the writing task.</i>	<i>information to support accurate citation (for example, Act, Scene, and Line number)</i>	
40 mins	<b>INITIATING THE TASK (CONTROLLING IDEA):</b> Ability to establish a controlling idea and consolidate information relevant to task.	<b>OPENING PARAGRAPH</b> <i>Write an opening paragraph that includes a controlling thesis and sequences the key points you plan to make in your composition</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writes a concise summary statement or draft opening.</li> <li>Provides direct answer to main prompt requirements.</li> <li>Establishes a controlling idea.</li> <li>Identifies key points that support development of argument.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer several examples of opening paragraphs from previous student responses to a similar prompt (Informational/Explanatory Comparison).</li> <li>Ask class to discuss what makes them strong or weak.</li> <li>Review the list that students created earlier to identify needed elements.</li> </ul>
40 mins	<b>PLANNING:</b> Ability to develop a line of thought and text structure appropriate to an argumentation task.	<b>OUTLINE/ORGANIZER</b> <i>Create an outline based on your notes and reading in which you state your claim, sequence your points, and note your supporting evidence.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creates an outline or organizer.</li> <li>Supports controlling idea.</li> <li>Uses evidence from texts read earlier.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide and teach one or more examples of outlines or organizers.</li> <li>Invite students to generate questions in pairs about how the format works, and then take and answer questions.</li> </ul>
1 hr and 30 mins	<b>INITIAL DRAFT &amp; DEVELOPMENT:</b> Ability to construct an initial draft with an emerging line of thought and structure.	<b>DRAFT</b> <i>Write an initial draft complete with opening, development, and closing; insert and cite textual evidence.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides complete draft with all parts.</li> <li>Supports the opening in the later sections with evidence and citations.</li> </ul>	Encourage students to re-read prompt partway through writing, to check that they are on-track.
1 hr and 30 mins	<b>REVISION:</b> Ability to refine text, including line of thought, language usage, and tone as appropriate to audience and purpose.	<b>MULTIPLE DRAFTS</b> <i>Refine composition's analysis, logic, and organization of ideas/points. Use textual evidence carefully, with accurate citations. Decide what to include and what not to include.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides complete draft with all parts.</li> <li>Supports the opening in the later sections with evidence and citations.</li> <li>Improves earlier edition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Model useful feedback that balances support for strengths and clarity about weaknesses.</li> <li>Assign students to provide each other with feedback on those issues.</li> <li>Have students score drafts with LDC Rubric and make changes as needed in order to score in the "meets" or "exceeds" category</li> </ul>
40 mins	<b>EDITING:</b> Ability to proofread and format a piece to make it more effective.	<b>CORRECT DRAFT</b> <i>Revise draft to have sound spelling, capitalization, punctuation and grammar.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides draft free from distracting surface errors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Briefly review selected skills that many students need to improve.</li> <li>Teach a short list of proofreading marks.</li> <li>Assign students to proofread each other's texts a</li> </ul>

		Adjust formatting as needed to provide clear, appealing text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses format that supports purpose.</li> </ul>	second time.
5 mins	<b>COMPLETION:</b> Ability to submit final work that is on task.	<b>FINAL DRAFT</b> Turn in your complete set of drafts, plus the final version of your piece	Demonstrates that composition is on task and ready for evaluation	Celebrate!

## Instructional Resources

No resources specified

## Section 4: What Results?

### Student Work Samples

No resources specified

### Teacher Reflection

There are two ways to teach this module. The first is to lead your class through a close reading of the entire play and then do the seminar on the two soliloquies that are featured in the seminar plan and writing task. The second is to provide your students with a list of characters and plot summary of the **play** and then lead your students through close readings of the two soliloquies. If you read the entire play, we recommend that you follow some version of the following steps:


1. Inspectional reading: have students work in groups of 3-5 to examine the text and list as many characteristics as possible (Act/Scene/Line distinctions, written partially in poetry, list of characters, stage directions, etc.)
2. Vocabulary: have students keep a vocabulary log in their class notebooks or daybooks, in which they record a running list of words that they deem both important and unfamiliar. At the end of each Act, give students class time to add definitions to their lists (noting where the words appear in the play). Before your class discussion of each scene, discuss unfamiliar vocabulary before working your way through the scene.
3. Analytical reading: assign 2-3 students to focus on each of the major characters in the play and create a running record (scene by scene) of references to that character, actions by that character, speeches by that character, etc. Do not assign Hamlet to any students, as his character will become the focus of the seminar discussion and the writing task.
4. Read at least one scene from each Act aloud in class, assigning student volunteers the various characters to play.
5. Viewing: consider showing a recent video of the play itself after class discussion of the entire play but before the close reading of the two soliloquies that will precede the seminar.
6. Writing: If you do choose to read the entire play with your students, you may also choose to allow students to refer to the entire play in their essays; otherwise, they should only refer to the two excerpts that are the focus of the seminar.

### Optional Assessment:

*Classroom Assessment:* What is Hamlet's state of mind by the final act of the play? After reading his famous "Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him..." speech (Act V, Scene 1), write a fully developed paragraph in which you analyze Hamlet's mental state at this point. Support your discussion with evidence from the text.

*Background for Assessment:* If students have not read the entire play (because this is a pre-test or because they are only reading excerpts in this module), provide them with a short plot summary of the play: explain that Act V opens with the return of Hamlet to Elsinore, where he and his friend Horatio come across a grave digger who, while digging a grave, is throwing up the skulls of those formerly buried in the same plot of ground.

## ***All Attachments***

 Soliloquies from "Hamlet" (can also use the entire play) :  
<https://s ldc.org/u/60jcoitwv1gey8huzm7x6gm9u>