Introduction

In this lesson, students examine Virginia Woolf’s point of view and use of rhetoric. Students focus on chapter 3, pages 50–51 of *A Room of One’s Own* (from “But for my part, I agree with the deceased bishop” to “or the length of the winter’s night”), in which Woolf develops her point of view about why it would have been “impossible” (p. 48) for a woman to write Shakespeare’s works during his time. Student learning is assessed via a Silent Discussion at the end of the lesson in response to the following prompt: How does Woolf use rhetoric to convey her point of view?

For homework, students write an objective summary of the excerpts from *A Room of One’s Own* studied so far, using vocabulary from 11.1.3 Lessons 1–3. Students also continue with their Accountable Independent Reading (AIR) through the lens of focus standard RL.11-12.6 or RI.11-12.6.

Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessed Standard(s)</th>
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<tr>
<td>RI.11-12.6</td>
<td>Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.</td>
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<th>Addressed Standard(s)</th>
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<tr>
<td>RI.11-12.1</td>
<td>Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>W.11-12.9.b</td>
<td>Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.</td>
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<td>b. Apply <em>grades 11–12 Reading standards</em> to literary nonfiction (e.g., “Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S. texts, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning [e.g., in U.S. Supreme Court Case majority opinions and dissents] and the premises, purposes, and arguments in works of public advocacy [e.g., <em>The Federalist</em>, presidential addresses]”).</td>
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<td>SL.11-12.1.a, c, d</td>
<td>Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <em>grades 11–12 topics, texts, and</em></td>
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issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

a. 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.

c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

d. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

L.11-12.4.a, b

Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grades 11–12 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

a. Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word’s position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

b. Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., conceive, conception, conceivable).

Assessment

Assessment(s)

Student learning is assessed via a Silent Discussion at the end of the lesson. Students respond to the following prompt, citing textual evidence to support analysis and inferences drawn from the text.

• How does Woolf use rhetoric to convey her point of view?

High Performance Response(s)

A High Performance Response should:

• Identify one or more rhetorical devices Woolf uses (e.g., parallel structure, rhetorical question, alliteration).

• Convey an understanding of Woolf’s point of view (e.g., Woolf states that it is “unthinkable that any woman in Shakespeare’s day should have had Shakespeare’s genius” (p. 50) because gender roles were so strict as to keep women from writing.).

• Demonstrate how Woolf’s use of rhetoric contributes to the development of her point of view.
(e.g., Woolf uses a rhetorical question to advance her point of view: “How, then, could [genius] have been born among women whose work began ... almost before they were out of the nursery, who were forced to it by their parents and held to it by all the power of law and custom?” (p. 50) to lay out her point of view that a woman could not have had “Shakespeare’s genius” (p. 50). With this question, Woolf draws the reader in, allowing the reader to attempt to answer how a woman could have genius if she was forced to work by her parents, the law, and the customs of her society. The reader must conclude with Woolf that if women were “forced” into work at a very young age (p. 50) then it would have been impossible for them to develop their intellectual or artistic gifts.).

### Vocabulary

#### Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)

- **dashed (v.)** – struck or smashed violently, especially so as to break to pieces
- **inglorious (adj.)** – shameful
- **Anon (n.)** – anonymous, unnamed, unknown

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

- **servile (adj.)** – being in slavery; oppressed

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

- **nursery (n.)** – the room where a baby sleeps
- **ducked (v.)** – pushed underwater
- **possessed (adj.)** – controlled by a usually evil spirit
- **suppressed (adj.)** – stopped by force; kept secret; not allowed to feel, show, or be affected by
- **mute (adj.)** – not able or willing to speak

### Lesson Agenda/Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student-Facing Agenda</th>
<th>% of Lesson</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standards &amp; Text:</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Standards: RI.11-12.6, RI.11-12.1, W.11-12.9.b, SL.11-12.1.a, c, d, L.11-12.4.a, b</td>
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<tr>
<td>Text: <em>A Room of One’s Own</em> by Virginia Woolf, Chapter 3, pages 50–51</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Learning Sequence:</strong></td>
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</table>
1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda 10%
2. Homework Accountability 10%
3. Reading and Discussion 50%
4. Silent Discussion and Assessment 20%
5. Closing 10%

Materials

- Student copies of the 11.1 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Type of Text &amp; Interpretation of the Symbol</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Percentage indicates the percentage of lesson time each activity should take.</td>
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<tr>
<td>no symbol</td>
<td>Plain text indicates teacher action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bold text</td>
<td>Indicates questions for the teacher to ask students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italicized text</td>
<td>Indicates a vocabulary word.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶</td>
<td>Indicates student action(s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⇌</td>
<td>Indicates possible student response(s) to teacher questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✋</td>
<td>Indicates instructional notes for the teacher.</td>
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Activity 1: Introduction of Lesson Agenda 10%

Begin by reviewing the agenda and the assessed standard for this lesson: RI.11-12.6. In this lesson, students continue reading chapter 3, pages 51–52 of A Room of One’s Own and analyze through discussions how Woolf uses rhetoric to convey her point of view.

- Students look at the agenda.

Instruct students to take out their copies of the 11.1 Common Core Learning Standards Tool. Inform students that in this lesson they begin to work with two new standards: RI.11-12.6 and RI.11-12.1. Instruct students to individually read the standards on their tools and assess their familiarity with and mastery of them.

- Students read and assess their familiarity with standards RI.11-12.6 and RI.11-12.1.
Instruct students to talk in pairs about what they think the standards mean. Lead a brief discussion about the standards.

For RI.11-12.1:

- Student responses should include:
  - Students use strong, thorough textual evidence to support their claims.
  - Students draw inferences from texts.
  - Students determine where texts leave matters uncertain.

For RI.11-12.6:

- Student responses should include:
  - Students identify an author’s purpose or point of view in a text.
  - Students analyze how an author uses rhetorical devices, other stylistic choices, and the content of the text to make the text powerful, persuasive, or beautiful.

Consider asking students to recall the discussions from 11.1.2 about fresh, engaging, or beautiful language in relation to RL.11-12.4. Draw students’ attention to the similarity of language in these standards while making the point that strong rhetoric helps to make a persuasive argument.

Instruct students to Think, Pair, Share about the following question:

If Shakespeare used engaging and beautiful language to create new meaning or descriptions of the world, what is the use of beautiful or engaging language in making an argument?

- Student responses may include:
  - Using engaging language helps to make an argument stronger.
  - Engaging or beautiful language may also make listeners or readers pay more attention to or believe more strongly in an argument.

Explain to students that rhetoric refers to the specific techniques that writers or speakers use to create meaning in a text, make a text or a speech more interesting or beautiful, and especially, persuade readers or listeners. Point out to students that they use rhetoric in everyday speech to persuade others to agree with a particular point of view. Several rhetorical techniques such as irony, rhetorical questions, and ways of structuring a sentence may be familiar to students. Share with students the following examples of rhetorical techniques and lead a brief discussion of the use of rhetoric in everyday speech. Some examples from this lesson’s text include:
• **Rhetorical question:** “How, then, could it have been born among women whose work began, according to Professor Trevelyan, almost before they were out of the nursery, who were forced to it by their parents and held to it by all the power of law and custom?” (p. 50).

• **Irony:** “It is unthinkable that any woman in Shakespeare’s day should have had Shakespeare’s genius” (p. 50).

• **Sentence structure, listing:** “For genius like Shakespeare’s is not born among labouring, uneducated, servile people” (p. 50).

• **Alliteration:** “an Emily Brontë or a Robert Burns blazes out and proves its presence” (p. 50).

• **Parallel structure:** “It was not born in England among the Saxons and the Britons. It is not born today among the working classes” (p. 50).

Lead a brief whole-class discussion about rhetorical devices.

**Activity 2: Homework Accountability 10%**

Instruct students to take out their responses to the previous lesson’s homework assignment. (Choose one moment from this lesson’s focus excerpt, chapter 3, pages 48–50, and analyze Woolf’s use of language to describe the characters and their actions. Respond briefly in writing to the following prompt: How do Woolf’s word choices impact the meaning and tone of the text?) Instruct students to form pairs to discuss their homework responses.

- **Student responses may include:**
  - Woolf’s description of the theater manager as a “fat, loose-lipped man” who “guffawed” (p. 49) conveys a crude, negative image of the theater manager.
  - By writing: “The birds that sang in the hedge were not more musical than she was” (p. 49), Woolf describes Judith’s talent in a vivid way.
  - By showing Judith’s father offering Judith “a chain of beads or a fine petticoat” (p. 49) if she changed her mind about marrying, Woolf shows how Judith’s father resorted to bribery to try to get Judith to obey.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

**Activity 3: Reading and Discussion 50%**

Instruct students to form small groups. Post or project each set of questions below for students to discuss. Instruct students to annotate for rhetorical devices using the annotation code RD as they read and discuss.
Consider reminding students that this focused annotation supports students’ engagement with W.11-12.9.b, which addresses the use of textual evidence in writing.

If necessary to support comprehension and fluency, consider using a masterful reading of the focus excerpt for the lesson.

Differentiation Consideration: Consider posting or projecting the following guiding question to support students in their reading throughout this lesson:

Why does Woolf think a woman could not have had “Shakespeare’s genius” (p. 50)?

Instruct students to read page 50 of A Room of One’s Own (from “But for my part, I agree with the deceased bishop” to “It is not born today among the working classes”) and discuss the following questions in their groups.

Differentiation Consideration: Consider providing students with the following definition: 

Students write the definition of nursery on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

How does Woolf’s claim that it is “unthinkable that any woman in Shakespeare’s day should have had Shakespeare’s genius” (p. 50) develop Woolf’s point of view?

Woolf’s claim that it is “unthinkable” that during Shakespeare’s time any woman could “have had Shakespeare’s genius” develops her point of view that gender roles were so strict that women writers could not use their talent. A woman could not “have had Shakespeare’s genius” because there would have been no opportunity for her to develop it.

In addition to women, what other groups does Woolf suggest lack literary genius?

Woolf argues that genius does not exist “among labouring, uneducated, servile people” (p. 50). She states that genius “is not born today among the working classes” or “in England among the Saxons or Britons” (p. 50), because those groups of people are not given opportunity to pursue education or encouragement to refine their passions.

Determine the meaning of servile by looking at its word parts and the words surrounding it.

The word part serve is in the word servile. Also, the words before servile are “labouring, uneducated” (p. 50), so the word servile likely refers to people who serve others or are below them.

Consider drawing students’ attention to their application of standard L.11-12.4.a, b through the process of using context and words parts to make meaning of a word.

What is Woolf’s point of view about why genius rarely exists among women?
Woolf writes, “genius like Shakespeare’s is not born among labouring, uneducated, servile people” (p. 50). This suggests that women are raised to labor and serve and are denied education, which prevents their genius from developing.

How does Woolf refine her point of view in this portion of the text?

Woolf uses parallel structure to show that lack of genius is not a problem that solely belongs to women but is the case among other disadvantaged people: “genius like Shakespeare’s is not born among labouring, uneducated, servile people. It was not born in England among the Saxons and the Britons. It is not born today among the working classes” (p. 50). Woolf’s repetition of the phrase “not born among” (p. 50) and her use of parallel structure in these sentences emphasizes her point of view that women who were “labouring, uneducated, servile people” (p. 50) in Shakespeare’s day could not have been geniuses.

Consider reminding students that this repetitive structure is a rhetorical device called parallel structure. Define parallel structure as “using the same pattern of words to show that two or more ideas are equally important.”

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Instruct students to read page 50 (from “How then could it have been born among women” to “by their parents and held to it by all the power of law and custom?”) and discuss the following questions in their groups.

What is “it” referring to in the sentence that begins “How then could it have been born” (p. 50)?

“it” is referring to literary genius.

What rhetorical device does Woolf use here?

Woolf uses a rhetorical question in this excerpt.

What does Woolf accomplish by using this device?

Woolf draws the reader in with the question. The reader answers the question and must conclude with Woolf that it would be “impossible” (p. 48) for women to possess literary genius, since they were forced to work from the beginning of their lives. By drawing the reader in with a rhetorical question, Woolf aligns the reader to her point of view.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.
Instruct student groups to read pages 50–51 (from “Yet genius of a sort must have existed” to “or the length of the winter’s night”) and discuss the following questions in their groups.

Provide students with the following definitions: **dashed** means “struck or smashed violently, especially so as to break to pieces,” **Anon** means “anonymous or unnamed,” and **inglorious** means “shameful.”

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

- Students write the definitions of **dashed, Anon,** and **inglorious** on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

**Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the following definitions: **ducked** means “pushed underwater,” **possessed** means “controlled by a usually evil spirit,” **suppressed** means “stopped by force; kept secret; not allowed to feel, show, or be affected by,” and **mute** means “not able or willing to speak.”

- Students write the definitions of **ducked, possessed, suppressed,** and **mute** on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

**Why does “genius” have to “blaze” to “prove its presence” (p. 50)?**

- Woolf suggests that “genius” must “blaze” out of poverty or oppression to “prove its presence” among the oppressed and “working classes” (p. 50) because people would otherwise not believe “genius” exists there.

- Consider drawing students’ attention to Woolf’s use of alliteration (“Brontë or ... Burns blazes ... proves its presence” (p. 50) as another rhetorical device. Define **alliteration** as “the repetition of the same sound at the beginning of a word.”

**What does Woolf suggest is the connection between “a woman possessed by devils” and “a suppressed poet” (p. 50)?**

- Woolf suggests that women accused of being “possessed by devils” (p. 50) could in fact have been suppressed poets or women of literary genius.

**Explain what might make “some mute and inglorious Jane Austen” feel or act “crazed” (p. 50).**

- The “torture” (p. 50) of having a gift and being unable to express or use it would make a woman feel “crazed.”

**Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle with these questions, consider providing the following information: Jane Austen and the Brontë sisters were famous female writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Robert Burns is considered Scotland’s greatest poet.
What is the connotation of the word **torture**? What is the effect of Woolf’s use of the word **torture** on page 50 to describe a woman’s experience of being gifted?

- The word “torture” is violent and painful. Woolf’s use of the word “torture” to describe a woman being gifted emphasizes how intensely a woman might suffer.

Inform students that using such strong, conflicting words such as **torture** and **gifted** is also a use of **rhetoric** meant to evoke a strong contrast.

What does Woolf mean that “Anon … was often a woman” (p. 50)?

- She means that poems or songs written by “Anon”, or written anonymously, were often women, because even if some women were able to write, they could not put their names on their work because society, or the “law” and “custom” (p. 50), would not have accepted women writers.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses. Remind students to annotate the text for rhetorical devices using the annotation code RD.

**Activity 4: Silent Discussion and Assessment 20%**

Instruct students to form pairs. Explain that in this lesson, students do a Silent Discussion for their assessment. Students respond independently to a prompt and then exchange responses with a peer, who builds upon or questions the other student’s response before returning their peer’s paper.

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

**How does Woolf use rhetoric to convey her point of view?**

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 Silent Discussion prompt.
- Display the prompt for students to see, or provide the prompt in hard copy.

Transition to the Silent Discussion.

- Students independently respond to the prompt using evidence from the text.
  - See the High Performance Response at the beginning of this lesson.

Instruct students to exchange papers and build upon or add questions to their peer’s response.
① Students may complete the cycle more than once at the teacher’s discretion.
① Consider drawing students’ attention to their application of standards SL.11-12.1.a, c, d, which focus on coming to discussions prepared, asking questions to propel the discussion, and responding to diverse perspectives.

Activity 5: Closing

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to respond briefly in writing to the following prompt:

Write an objective summary of pages 48–51 of A Room of One’s Own (from “Be that as it may, I could not help thinking” to “or the length of a winter’s night”).

Ask students to use vocabulary from 11.1.3 Lessons 1–3 wherever possible in their written responses. Remind students to use the Short Response Rubric and Checklist to guide their written responses.

Also for homework, instruct students to continue to read their AIR texts through the lens of focus standard RL.11-12.6 or RI.11-12.6 and prepare for a 3–5 minute discussion of their texts based on that standard.

Introduce standard RL.11-12.6 or RI.11-12.6 and model what applying a focus standard looks like. For example, RI.11-12.6 asks students to “Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.” Students who are reading A Room of One’s Own may say, “Woolf uses a rhetorical question to draw the reader in and allow the reader to conclude with her that it would have been ‘impossible’ (p. 48) for a woman to have Shakespeare’s genius in Shakespeare’s day.”

▶ Students follow along.

Homework

Respond briefly in writing to the following prompt:

Write an objective summary of pages 48–51 of A Room of One’s Own (from “Be that as it may, I could not help thinking” to “or the length of a winter’s night”).

Use vocabulary from 11.1.3 Lessons 1–3 wherever possible in your written response. Remember to use the Short Response Rubric and Checklist to guide your written response.

Also, continue reading your Accountable Independent Reading text through the lens of focus standard RL.11-12.6 or RI.11-12.6 and prepare for a 3–5 minute discussion of your text based on that standard.