

## 10.4.1

## Lesson 1

## Introduction

In this first lesson of the unit and module, students begin analysis of E. B. White’s personal narrative essay “Death of a Pig.” Students listen to a masterful reading of the full text before analyzing specific word choices in the first section of the essay (from “I spent several days and nights in mid-September” through “two ounces of castor oil on the place”), in which White introduces the reader to the pig and sets the stage for the pig’s death. Students review the characteristics of a personal narrative essay. They then consider the impact of word choice on the development of the humorous and mournful tones interwoven throughout the text, and analyze White’s use of the word *tragedy* in the context of the essay’s events. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: How do words and phrases in section 1 reveal White’s tone?

For homework, students reread the first section of the essay and identify a central idea of the text.

## Standards

Assessed Standard(s)	
RI.9-10.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).
Addressed Standard(s)	
W.9-10.9.b	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.  b. Apply <i>grades 9–10 Reading standards</i> to literary nonfiction (e.g., “Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning”).
L.9-10.4.a	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.  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.
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## Assessment

### Assessment(s)

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.

- How do words and phrases in section 1 reveal White’s tone?

 Throughout this unit, Quick Writes will be evaluated using the Short Response Rubric.

### High Performance Response(s)

A High Performance Response should:

- Identify the tone in section 1 (e.g., the tone is at times humorous and at times mournful).
- Identify specific words and phrases that reveal that tone (e.g., E. B. White creates a metaphor of a dramatic play in section 1 that is both *tragedy* (section 1, paragraph 2) and *slapstick* (section 1, paragraph 3)—he talks about the sickness and death of the pig in a sad way as an “interruption” that he does not want. However, the author also tells a joke about a pig talking in section 1, paragraph 4. White develops both tones in this section.)

## Vocabulary

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

- afflicts (v.) – causes pain or suffering (to someone or something)
- deterioration (n.) – the act or process of becoming worse
- farcical (adj.) – laughably inept; absurd; ridiculous
- enema (n.) – a procedure in which liquid is forced into the intestines through the anus
- presentiment (n.) – a belief or feeling that something is going to happen
- slapstick (n.) – comedy that involves physical action (such as falling down or hitting people)
- vigil (n.) – an event or period of time when a person stays in a place and quietly waits, prays, etc. especially at night
- interment (n.) – burial

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

- tragedy (n.) – a very sad, unfortunate or upsetting situation, usually involving a death
- deviation (n.) – an action, behavior or condition that is different from what is usual or expected

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

- accounting (n.) – reporting; a description of facts or events
- sharply (adj.) – clearly or distinctly
- scheme (n.) – the way something is arranged or organized
- fitness (n.) – the quality of being suitable for a specified purpose
- icehouse (n.) – a building in which ice is made or stored
- trough (n.) – a long shallow container from which animals eat or drink
- odds and ends (idiom) – different kinds of things that are usually small and unimportant

## Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
<p><b>Standards &amp; Text:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standards: RI.9-10.4, W.9-10.9.b, L.9-10.4.a</li> <li>• Text: “Death of a Pig,” by E. B. White, section 1, paragraphs 1–8</li> </ul> <p><b>Learning Sequence:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda</li> <li>2. Masterful Reading</li> <li>3. Reading and Discussion</li> <li>4. Quick Write</li> <li>5. Closing</li> </ol>	<p>1. 10%</p> <p>2. 25%</p> <p>3. 50%</p> <p>4. 10%</p> <p>5. 5%</p>

## Materials

- Copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist for each student
  - Copies of “Death of a Pig” for each student
- ① Consider numbering the paragraphs of “Death of a Pig” before the lesson. This unit’s reading of “Death of a Pig” references paragraph numbers by section (e.g., section 1, paragraph 1; section 2, paragraph 3).

## 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 questions for the teacher to ask students.</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

10%

Begin by reviewing the agenda and the assessed standard for this lesson: RI.9-10.4. Remind students to consult their 10.1, 10.2, and 10.3 Common Core Learning Standards Tools to review the standards as necessary. In this lesson, students are introduced to a new text: E. B. White’s essay “Death of a Pig.” Students listen to a masterful reading of the full text. Students then read and discuss the first section of the essay, considering White’s tone as well as focusing on word choice and choosing from a range of strategies to determine the meaning of unfamiliar or figurative language.

- ▶ Students look at the agenda.

Ask students to Turn-and-Talk about the following question:

#### What are the characteristics and components of a personal narrative essay?

- ☞ Student responses may include:
  - Usually autobiographical
  - Tells a story (usually has the components of a plot: rising action, conflict, resolution, etc.)
  - Often includes characters, dialogue, and description
  - Usually focuses on a small moment of great importance in the author’s life

ⓘ **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle to answer this question, consider reminding them of their work with Julia Alvarez’s personal narrative essay in 10.2.2.

Lead a brief, whole-class discussion of student responses. Encourage students to note the characteristics and components of a personal narrative essay as they read White’s “Death of a Pig.”

## Activity 2: Masterful Reading

25%

Have students listen to a masterful reading of “Death of a Pig” in its entirety. Ask students to listen for words, phrases, and details that establish and develop E. B. White’s tone.

- ▶ Students follow along, reading silently.
- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing visual aids to support students’ understanding of the location (farm) and animals (pig, dachshund) and building (icehouse) referenced in the text.
- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider asking students to listen for the major events of the essay during the masterful reading. Also, consider posting or projecting the following optional extension questions to deepen students’ understanding:

**Read the title of the text. From the words in the title, what may happen in this text?**

💬 A pig is going to die.

**What feeling does the title create at the beginning of the text?**

💬 Student responses may include:

- It creates a feeling of curiosity about how a whole essay could be about an event named in the title.
- Also, it creates a sense of mystery because the reader knows what is going to happen, but not how it is going to happen.

Lead a brief, whole-class discussion of student responses.

## Activity 3: Reading and Discussion

50%

Instruct students to form pairs. Post or project each set of questions below for students to discuss.

Instruct student pairs to read section 1, paragraphs 1–3 of “Death of a Pig” (from “I spent several days and nights in mid-September” to “I’m running ahead of my story and shall have to go back”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

Provide students with the following definitions: *afflicts* means “causes pain or suffering (to someone or something)”; *deterioration* means “the act or process of becoming worse”; *farcical* means “laughably inept; absurd; ridiculous”; *enema* means “a procedure in which liquid is forced into the intestines through the anus”; *presentiment* means “a belief or feeling that something is going to happen”; *vigil* means “an event or period of time when a person stays in a place and quietly waits, prays, etc., especially at night”; and *interment* means “burial.”

- ① Students may be familiar with some of these words. Consider asking students to volunteer definitions before providing them to the class.
- ▶ Students write the definitions of *afflicts*, *deterioration*, *farical*, *enema*, *presentiment*, *vigil*, and *interment* on their copy of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the following definitions: *accounting* means “reporting; a description of facts or events”; *sharply* means “clearly or distinctly”; *scheme* means “the way something is arranged or organized”; *fitness* means “the quality or state of being appropriate; being suitable for a specific purpose”; *icehouse* means “a building in which ice is made or stored”; *trough* means “a long shallow container from which animals eat or drink”; and *odds and ends* means “different kinds of things that are usually small and unimportant.”
- ▶ Students write the definitions of *accounting*, *sharply*, *scheme*, *fitness*, *icehouse*, *trough*, and *odds and ends* on their copy of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

Ask students to volunteer their understanding of the word *tragedy*.

- 🗨 Student responses may include:
- A serious story that ends in a disaster, usually death.
  - A dramatic play that ends with death, like in *Romeo and Juliet* when they both commit suicide at the end of the play, or a dramatic play that ends with an upsetting event, like at the end of *Oedipus The King* when the queen kills herself and Oedipus gouges out his eyes.
- ① Consider encouraging students to recall their understanding of *tragedy* in the context of previous texts they have read and analyzed (e.g., *Romeo and Juliet* in 9.1.3, and *Oedipus The King* in 9.2.2). Students may not have an advanced understanding of the concepts of *tragedy* and classic literary *tragedy* at this point, but continue to return to these concepts throughout this and the following unit.

**How does E. B. White describe *tragedy* in section 1, paragraph 2?**

- 🗨 White refers to *tragedy* as something “familiar” that follows a “pattern” or “script.” He describes the usual events of buying and slaughtering a pig for food. It includes a “murder,” but there does not seem to be anything sad or scary about White’s *tragedy*. It is part of the normal relationship between the farmer and the pig.

**What might be White’s purpose in referring to these events as a *tragedy*?**

- 🗨 Student responses may include:
- The death of a pig is not usually considered a *tragedy*, and the events White describes (“buying a spring pig ... feeding it ... butchering it” (section 1, paragraph 2)) do not seem to

be particularly tragic in the way that the events of *Romeo and Juliet* are tragic. By referring to these events as a *tragedy*, White adds a level of drama and tension to an otherwise routine set of events.

- By referring to these events as a *tragedy*, White is exaggerating the situation and his sadness, which seems funny.
- ① Students may not note the humor of White’s exaggerated grief at this point, but continue to consider examples of his humor throughout this and future lessons.
- ① Students return to the pivotal line “Once in a while something slips—” (section 1, paragraph 3) in later lessons of this unit as they consider central ideas of the text.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

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Instruct student pairs to annotate paragraphs 1 through 3 for words and phrases that reference the passage of time in section 1 and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

🗨 Student annotations may include:

- “I spent several days and nights in mid-September” (section 1, paragraph 1)
  - “this stretch of time” (section 1, paragraph 1)
  - “I cannot recall the hours sharply” (section 1, paragraph 1)
  - “not ready to say whether death came on the third night or the fourth night” (section 1, paragraph 1)
  - “the scheme of buying a spring pig in blossom time, feeding it through summer and fall, and butchering it when the solid cold weather arrives” (section 1, paragraph 2)
  - “I had a presentiment, the very first afternoon” (section 1, paragraph 3)
  - “I’m running ahead of my story and shall have to go back” (section 1, paragraph 3)
- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** Students may need support to understand the use of the adverb *sharply* in section 1, paragraph 1 to mean “clearly or distinctly,” rather than the more common “having a sharp edge or point.”

**How does the passage of time in these paragraphs compare to what White describes as “familiar” (section 1, paragraph 2)?**

- 🗨 Time is normally a “familiar scheme” (section 1, paragraph 2) that follows a “pattern” or “script” (section 1, paragraph 2); however, in this essay, something has happened to make time work in a strange way. The author is unable to “recall the hours sharply” (section 1, paragraph 1) and

tells the story out of order—“I’m running ahead of my story and shall have to go back” (section 1, paragraph 3).

### Which words and phrases show how E. B. White feels toward the passage of time?

- The author feels “uncertainty” (section 1, paragraph 1) toward the passage of time, and it is causing him to have a sense of trouble or sickness—he is not in “decent health” (section 1, paragraph 1).

### Which words and phrases does White use to describe his “role” (section 1, paragraph 3) in these events?

- White is “cast suddenly in the role of pig’s friend and physician—a farcical character” (section 1, paragraph 3). This is not a serious role, like a character in a *tragedy*; rather, it is funny to imagine a man as a pig’s friend or doctor.

### How does White achieve humor in section 1, paragraph 3?

- Student responses may include:
  - White has an “enema bag for a prop” (section 1, paragraph 3), and because an *enema* is an unpleasant procedure and an enema bag is a strange prop, it adds humor to the scene.
  - Additionally, White’s dog, Fred, acts as his partner who “held the bag” (section 1, paragraph 3). This personification adds humor to the scene.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider a brief discussion of *slapstick* and either ask students for examples, or provide them with one to support their understanding of the humorous tone of this section.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

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Instruct student pairs to read section 1, paragraphs 4–7 of “Death of a Pig” (from “My pigpen is at the bottom of an old orchard” to “even if he’s wrong, it can’t do any harm”). Instruct students to annotate for words and phrases that reveal when and where the events of this essay are taking place. Ask students to share their annotations in their pairs, as well as their observations about when and where the events of this essay are taking place.

- Student annotations may include:
  - “My pigpen is at the bottom of an old orchard below the house” (section 1, paragraph 4)
  - “faded building which once was an icehouse” (section 1, paragraph 4)
  - “There is a pleasant yard” (section 1, paragraph 4)

- “I went to the phone and cranked it four times” (section 1, paragraph 5)
- “There is never any identification needed on a country phone” (section 1, paragraph 5)

🗨️ The events of this essay are taking place sometime in the past, on a country farm.

① Consider providing students with a visual of a rotary phone to clarify the image of a phone being “cranked” (section 1, paragraph 5). Ask students to consider how the rotary phone locates the essay in time.

🗨️ The events of this essay take place sometime in the near past, before the advent of modern technology like push-button phones and 10-digit phone numbers.

Instruct students to answer the following questions in pairs before sharing out with the class.

**Does White’s tone in these paragraphs align more to your understanding of *tragedy* or of *slapstick*? What words or phrases in the text suggest this tone?**

🗨️ Student observations may include:

- The tone of section 1, paragraphs 4–7 aligns more to the definition of *slapstick*. For example, White says, “[a] pig couldn’t ask for anything better—or none has, at any rate” (section 1, paragraph 4), which is humorous since it creates an image of a pig speaking. Also, turning the word “household” into “icehousehold” (section 1, paragraph 5) is humorous because it is a play on words.
- The tone is a combination of *tragedy* and *slapstick* because some of the details are funny, but some are sad such as “a chill wave of fear” (section 1, paragraph 5), which recalls the feeling of *tragedy*.

**What is the cumulative tone of section 1, paragraphs 4–7?**

🗨️ The cumulative tone of paragraphs 4 through 7 is humorous. E. B. White makes a joke about pigs talking in paragraph 4, “[a] pig couldn’t ask for anything better—or none has, at any rate,” and the conversation the author has with Mr. Henderson is more humorous than tragic.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

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Instruct student pairs to read section 1, paragraph 8 of “Death of a Pig” (from “I thanked Mr. Henderson. I didn’t go right down” to “two ounces of castor oil on the place”). Instruct students to annotate for repeating words or phrases. Ask students to share their annotations in their pairs.

🗨️ Student annotations may include:

- Repetition of “I wanted”: “I wanted no interruption in the regularity”; “I wanted no interruption, wanted no oil, no deviation”; “I just wanted”
- Repetition of “no interruption”
- “full meal after full meal”

Remind students that annotating helps them keep track of evidence they use later in lesson assessments, which focus on the cumulative impact of word choice on meaning and tone.

① This focused annotation supports students’ engagement with W.9-10.9.b, which addresses the use of textual evidence in writing.

### What does White’s use of repetition suggest about how he feels about these events?

- 🗨️ The repetitions create a sense of pattern or cycle. White goes around and around with his words, which emphasizes the feeling that everything is going wrong—it is a “collapse of the performance.” White just wants things to go back to the way they usually are in the normal repetition of events.

### What words and phrases in the text can help you make meaning of *deviation* in this context?

- 🗨️ The repetitions in this paragraph reveal that something has “interrupt[ed] ... the regularity” of events, something different has happened that is a “collapse.” *Deviation* is also in a list that places it alongside “interruption,” so a *deviation* must mean something negative that is different or out of the ordinary.

① Consider drawing students’ attention to their application of standard L.9-10.4.a through the process of using context and word parts to make meaning of a word.

### How does the tone of section 1, paragraph 8 affect the overall tone of section 1?

- 🗨️ Student responses may include:
  - The tone in section 1, paragraph 8 is serious and sad. White is “think[ing] about [his] troubles.” White is avoiding the “collapse of the performance,” which reminds the reader that something has gone wrong. White is avoiding facing this fact by putting off giving the pig the medicine.
  - This sadness contrasts with some of the more humorous parts of this section.
  - Because this is the final paragraph, it creates an overall tone of sadness in section 1, even during the parts that are humorous.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

## Activity 4: Quick Write

10%

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

### How do words and phrases in section 1 reveal White’s tone?

Instruct students to look at their annotations to find evidence. 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 5: Closing

5%

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to reread section 1 of “Death of a Pig” (from “I spent several days and nights in mid-September” through “two ounces of castor oil on the place”) and identify a central idea of the text. Inform students that there is no one right answer and they may choose to record as many central ideas as they identify.

- ▶ Students follow along.

## Homework

Reread section 1 of “Death of a Pig” (from “I spent several days and nights in mid-September” to “two ounces of castor oil on the place”), and identify a central idea of the text.

## Short Response Rubric

Assessed Standard(s): \_\_\_\_\_

	2-Point Response	1-Point Response	0-Point Response
Inferences/Claims	Includes valid inferences or claims from the text. Fully and directly responds to the prompt.	Includes inferences or claims that are loosely based on the text. Responds partially to the prompt or does not address all elements of the prompt.	Does not address any of the requirements of the prompt or is totally inaccurate.
Analysis	Includes evidence of reflection and analysis of the text.	A mostly literal recounting of events or details from the text(s).	The response is blank.
Evidence	Includes relevant and sufficient textual evidence to develop response according to the requirements of the Quick Write.	Includes some relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, or other information from the text(s) to develop an analysis of the text according to the requirements of the Quick Write.	The response includes no evidence from the text.
Conventions	Uses complete sentences where errors do not impact readability.	Includes incomplete sentences or bullets.	The response is unintelligible or indecipherable.

## Short Response Checklist

Assessed Standard(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Does my writing...	Did I...	✓
Include valid inferences and/or claims from the text(s)?	Closely read the prompt and address the whole prompt in my response?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Clearly state a text-based claim I want the reader to consider?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Confirm that my claim is directly supported by what I read in the text?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop an analysis of the text(s)?	Did I consider the author’s choices, the impact of word choices, the text’s central ideas, etc.?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Include evidence from the text(s)?	Directly quote or paraphrase evidence from the text?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Arrange my evidence in an order that makes sense and supports my claim?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reflect on the text to ensure the evidence I used is the best evidence to support my claim?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use complete sentences, correct punctuation, and spelling?	Reread my writing to ensure it means exactly what I want it to mean?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Review my writing for correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation?	<input type="checkbox"/>