LHS English 12 Unit 2

Content Area: **ELA**
Course(s):
Time Period: **MP2**
Length:
Status: **Published**

Unit Overview

Theme: The Limits of Free Will

Benchmark Text Focus: Literature

Anchor Text: Macbeth

Writing Genre Focus: Argumentative & Conventions

Targeted ELA Standards

Add the appropriate **NJSLS ELA** standards with which this unit aligns. This is done by clicking "actions" and then "add standards".

L.SS.11–12.1	Demonstrate command of the system and structure of the English language when writing or speaking.
L.SS.11–12.1.A	Apply the understanding that usage is a matter of convention, can change over time, and place, and is sometimes contested.
L.SS.11–12.1.B	Observe hyphenation conventions.
L.SS.11–12.1.C	Recognize spelling conventions.
L.KL.11–12.2	Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.
L.KL.11–12.2.A	Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level.
L.KL.11–12.2.B	Vary syntax for effect, apply an understanding of syntax to the study of complex texts.
L.KL.11–12.2.C	Demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.
L.VL.11–12.3	Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grades 11–12 reading and content, including technical meanings, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

L.VL.11–12.3.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.
L.VL.11–12.3.B	Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., conceive, conception, conceivable).
L.VL.11–12.3.C	Analyze how an author or speaker uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text or discussion.
L.VL.11–12.3.D	Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, its etymology, or its standard usage.
L.VL.11–12.3.E	Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).
L.VI.11–12.4	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings, including connotative meanings.
L.VI.11–12.4.A	Interpret figures of speech (e.g., hyperbole, paradox) in context and analyze their role in the text.
L.VI.11–12.4.B	Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.
L.VI.11–12.4.C	Analyze how the meaning of a key term or terms develops or is refined over the course of a text.
L.VI.11–12.4.D	Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful.
RL.CR.11–12.1	Accurately cite strong and thorough textual evidence and make relevant connections to strongly support a comprehensive analysis of multiple aspects of what a literary text says explicitly and inferentially, as well as interpretations of the text; this may include determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
RI.CR.11–12.1	Accurately cite a range of thorough textual evidence and make relevant connections to strongly support a comprehensive analysis of multiple aspects of what an informational text says explicitly and inferentially, as well as interpretations of the text.
RL.CI.11–12.2	Determine two or more themes of a literary text and analyze how they are developed and refined over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account or analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.
RI.CI.11–12.2	Determine two or more central ideas of an informational text and analyze how they are developed and refined over the course of a text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex account or analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.
RL.IT.11–12.3	Analyze the impact of the author's choices as they develop ideas throughout the text regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
RL.TS.11–12.4	Evaluate the author's choices concerning the structure and the effectiveness of specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) and how they contribute to its overall structure and meaning, as well as its aesthetic impact.
RL.PP.11–12.5	Evaluate perspectives/lenses from two or more texts on related topics and justify the more cogent viewpoint (e.g., different accounts of the same event or issue, use of different media or formats).
W.AW.11–12.1	Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
W.AW.11–12.1.A	Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

W.AW.11–12.1.B	Develop claim(s) and counterclaims avoiding common logical fallacies and using sound reasoning and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.
W.AW.11–12.1.C	Use transitions (e.g., words, phrases, clauses) to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
W.AW.11–12.1.D	Establish and maintain a style and tone appropriate to the audience and purpose (e.g., formal and objective for academic writing) while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
W.AW.11–12.1.E	Provide a concluding paragraph or section that supports the argument presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).
W.WP.11–12.4	Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, trying a new approach; sustaining effort to complete complex writing tasks; tracking and reflecting on personal writing progress (e.g., using portfolios, journals, conferencing); or consulting a style manual (such as MLA or APA Style), focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.
W.RW.11–12.7	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes.
SL.PE.11–12.1	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with peers on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
SL.PE.11–12.1.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.
SL.PE.11–12.1.B	Collaborate with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and assessments (e.g., student developed rubrics), and establish individual roles as needed.
SL.PE.11–12.1.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.
SL.PE.11–12.1.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.
SL.ES.11–12.3	Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.
SL.AS.11–12.6	Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Rationale

Throughout history, people have questioned how much control individuals truly have over their lives and whether their actions are shaped by choice, circumstance, or forces beyond their control. This unit explores the complex relationship between fate, free will, ambition, power, and personal responsibility. Through William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, students will examine how internal desires and external influences shape decisions and consider the extent to which individuals are responsible for the consequences of their choices.

Through a focus on argumentative writing, students will develop and defend claims using strong textual

evidence, valid reasoning, and consideration of multiple perspectives. Ultimately, students will consider: *How much control do we have over who we become, and to what extent are we responsible for the consequences of our choices?*

Enduring Understandings

Content Specific	Skills Specific
• **Free Will and Fate:** Individuals are influenced by internal desires, external pressures, and circumstances beyond their control, raising complex questions about how much agency people have over their actions and futures. • **Ambition, Power, and Consequences:** The pursuit of power can influence judgment, relationships, and morality, and individual choices can create consequences that extend beyond the individual. • **Responsibility and Influence:** External forces may influence an individual's decisions, but determining responsibility requires examining the relationship between influence, intention, choice, and action. • **Tragedy and the Human Experience:** Tragedy explores human flaws, conflicts, and consequences, allowing readers to consider how individual choices contribute to downfall and reveal broader truths about human nature.	• **Analyzing Author's Choices:** Strong readers analyze how an author's choices regarding character development, conflict, sequence, and structure contribute to a text's overall meaning. • **Analyzing Complex Themes:** Literary analysis requires readers to trace how multiple themes develop, interact, and become more complex throughout a text. • **Developing Arguments:** Effective arguments establish defensible claims and use relevant textual evidence and valid reasoning to support an interpretation. • **Evaluating Perspectives:** Critical readers consider multiple interpretations of a text and evaluate which perspectives are most strongly supported by evidence and reasoning.

Essential Questions

Content Specific	Skills Specific
• To what extent are individuals in control of their own choices and destinies? • How do ambition and the desire for power influence an individual's choices and morality?	• How do an author's choices about character, conflict, and sequence shape a literary work's meaning? • How does the structure of a tragedy contribute to its meaning and impact on an

• When outside forces influence our decisions, to what extent are we still responsible for the consequences? • How can guilt and fear alter an individual's identity, relationships, and actions? • What can tragedy reveal about human nature and the consequences of our choices?	audience? • How can readers trace the development and interaction of multiple themes across a complex literary text? • What makes an interpretation of literature convincing and well supported? • How can writers develop an effective argument using strong textual evidence, valid reasoning, and consideration of multiple perspectives?

Key Resources

Required Anchor Text:

- *Macbeth* — William Shakespeare
- Macbeth - ML Visual Reading Companion

Suggested Supporting Texts:

Suggested texts provide options for extending the unit's essential questions and target standards. Teachers should select texts based on instructional goals and student needs and may incorporate comparable Grade 11–12 complex texts that align with the unit's theme and standards.

Suggested Text	Type	Purpose / Connection
"Why Power Corrupts" — Christopher Shea, *Smithsonian Magazine*	Psychology / Informational	**Accessible–moderate.** Explores whether power corrupts or amplifies existing character; connects to Macbeth's moral transformation.
"Conformity, Compliance, and Obedience" — OpenStax (selected sections)	Psychology / Informational	**Accessible–moderate.** Explores how social pressure and authority influence choices; connects to manipulation and personal responsibility.
Selected text on Witchcraft in Shakespeare's England and King James I	Historical / Informational	**Accessible–moderate.** Provides context for Jacobean beliefs about prophecy, supernatural influence, and fate.
Selected text on the Divine Right of Kings and Jacobean Kingship	Historical / Informational	**Moderately complex.** Builds context for regicide, political order, legitimacy, and Macbeth's pursuit of power.

Lesson Ideas for Target Standards

Supplementary Resources

2026-2027 Writing Rubrics

Tier 1: Ways to Increase Support for Struggling Readers

Additional instructional resources:

- Comprehension microskills
- Tier I instructional practices
- Engagement toolkit

Lexia Aspire & PowerUp Resources:

- Word Recognition - phonemic awareness, decoding, fluency
- Language Comprehension - vocabulary, morphology, academic language, syntax
- Writing & reading comprehension - background knowledge, inference, main idea, making predictions, visualization, expository, narrative, argumentative, figurative language, sensory language, transition words, dialogue, counterclaims, editing
- Lexia PowerUp Graphic Organizers

Informational texts from district-approved resources.

Folger Shakespeare Library

Additional district-approved secondary ELA instructional resource list

Skills, Content, Activity, Assessment

Week	Priority Standards	Suggested Learning Targets	Mini-Lesson Skills	Suggested Student Centered Activities	Resources	Assessment
Week 1: Launching the Unit & Baseline Data	RL.CR.11–12.1; RL.CT.11–12.8	I can demonstrate my current reading skills. I can use historical and cultural context to deepen my understanding of a literary text.	**Reading:** Approaching Shakespearean language; drama conventions; historical/cultural context. **Writing:** Introduction to argumentative writing; argument vs. explanation; characteristics of an effective argument. **Vocabulary:** Strategies for unfamiliar/archaic language.	• Anticipation activity on fate/free will • Shakespeare-language exploration • Historical-context stations • Argument vs. explanation sorting activity	MP2 Reading Pre-Assessment (LinkIt!); *Macbeth*; selected historical/context resources; argumentative writing exemplar & rubric	**LinkIt! MP2 Reading Pre-Assessment**; argument-writing exemplar analysis
Weeks 2–3: Entering *Macbeth* — Fate, Influence & Choice	RL.CR.11–12.1; RL.IT.11–12.3; RL.CT.11–12.8; W.AW.11–12.1	I can analyze how Shakespeare develops characters through their choices, motivations, and relationships. I can	**AI Lesson: Prophecy and the Algorithm** **Reading:** Close reading Shakespeare; characterization; motivation; inference; prophecy/fate; author's choices; historical context.	• Collaborative scene annotation • Character/motivation tracking • Prophecy prediction/analysis • Teacher-led close reading • Context-text jigsaw • Thesis-statement workshop • Evidence	*Macbeth*; selected text on witchcraft/King James I; selected text on Divine Right/Jacobean kingship; or other suppoting informational text; argumentative writing rubric	Text-dependent response; character/choice analysis; argumentative thesis statement + evidence selection

		analyze how historical context influences meaning. I can develop a defensible argumentative thesis statement.	**Writing:** Unpacking argumentative prompts; developing a defensible thesis; reasons vs. evidence; selecting strong textual evidence.	ranking		
Weeks 4–5: Ambition, Power & Responsibility	RL.CR.11–12.1; RL.IT.11–12.3; RL.TS.11–12.4; W.AW.11–12.1	I can analyze how characters' choices and relationships contribute to the development of ideas and events. I can evaluate how Shakespeare's structural choices contribute to meaning. I can support an	**Reading:** Character development; cause/effect; structure; turning points; ambition/power; comparing literary and informational perspectives. **Writing:** Claim → evidence → analysis/explanation of evidence; body-paragraph organization; integrating quotations; reasoning; transitions.	• Character-choice continuum • Close-reading stations • Turning-point analysis • Evidence sorting; collaborative discussion • Paragraph-building station • Vocabulary station • Bring on the Benchmark practice questions	*Macbeth*; "Why Power Corrupts" — Christopher Shea; selected informational text(s); Bring on the Benchmark materials (LinkIt!)	Text-dependent response; evidence + analysis/explanation paragraph; **Bring on the Benchmark practice questions**

		argument with relevant evidence and reasoning.				
Weeks 6–7: Consequences, Guilt & Competing Interpretation	RL.CR.11–12.1; RL.IT.11–12.3; RL.TS.11–12.4; W.AW.11–12.1	I can analyze how Shakespeare develops multiple themes and complex characters. I can evaluate competing interpretations of Macbeth's responsibility. I can organize an argument using evidence and valid reasoning.	**Reading:** Interacting themes; character transformation; guilt/consequences; structure; comparing interpretations; informational-text connections. **Writing:** Organizing an argument; refining thesis statements; developing reasons; counterclaim and rebuttal; synthesizing literary and informational evidence.	• Theme-tracking stations • Character-transformation analysis • Structured debate • Evidence/reasoning sort • Argument-planning workshop • Counterclaim station • Collaborative discussion	*Macbeth*; "There's No Such Thing as Free Will" — Stephen Cave and/or "Conformity, Compliance, and Obedience" — OpenStax; argumentative rubric	Cross-text response; thesis statement + preliminary argument outline; counterclaim/rebuttal practice
Weeks 8–9: Completing *Macbeth* & Culminating	RL.CR.11–12.1; RL.IT.11–12.3; RL.TS.11–12.4; RL.CT.1	I can evaluate how Shakespeare's choices contribute	**Reading:** Tragic resolution; structure; author's choices; synthesizing character/theme development	• Complete *Macbeth* • Whole-play thematic synthesis • Structured discussion/debat	*Macbeth*; selected supporting informational texts; argumentative writing	Whole-play synthesis response; draft checkpoints; teacher/student writing conference;

Argumentative Writing	1–12.8; W.AW.11–12.1	to the play's tragic resolution and overall meaning. I can develop a cohesive argument supported by strong evidence and valid reasoning. I can revise my writing to strengthen my argument, organization, evidence, and clarity.	across the complete play. **Writing:** Introductions; logical organization; integrating evidence; counterclaims/rebuttals; conclusions; formal style; revision and editing; strengthening analysis/explanation of evidence; cohesion; conventions and citation.	e • Mentor-text analysis • Writing stations • Independent drafting • Peer feedback • Teacher writing conferences	exemplar/rubric; organizational tools	Summative Argumentative Writing Task
Final Days: Revision, Benchmark & Reflection	RL.CR.11–12.1; RL.IT.11–12.3; RL.TS.11–12.4; W.AW.11–12.1	I can independently apply the reading skills developed throughout the unit. I can reflect on how my	**Reading:** Application/review of priority reading skills, as needed. **Writing:** Revision and proofreading, as needed.	• Student self-assessment • Writing completion/make-up, as needed	MP2 Benchmark (LinkIt!); student writing/reflection materials	**LinkIt! MP2 Benchmark Assessment**; student reflection; final argumentative writing task, if not already submitted

		understanding of choice, influence, and responsibility has developed.				

Honors Addendum

Honors students will engage with the same anchor text, themes, and essential questions while extending their study through additional complex literary and informational texts. Students will examine competing perspectives on free will, fate, power, influence, and moral responsibility and will be expected to develop more nuanced interpretations of the forces that shape human choices and consequences.

Writing expectations will emphasize greater independence, complexity of argument, synthesis of multiple sources, consideration of counterclaims and competing interpretations, and purposeful integration of textual evidence.

Possible Honors Extension Texts:

Honors Extension Text	Type	Purpose / Connection
"Moral Responsibility" — *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (selected excerpt)	Philosophy / Informational	**More complex.** Examines free will, determinism, choice, and moral responsibility; deepens analysis of Macbeth's culpability.
"Of Ambition" — Francis Bacon (YouTube Summary of Essay)	Philosophical Essay / Primary Source	**More complex.** Explores the nature and dangers of ambition; provides a historical and philosophical comparison to Macbeth's pursuit of power.

Spiraling for Mastery

Content or Skill for this Unit	Spiral Focus from Previous Unit
• **Character & Author's Choices:** Analyze	• Apply close-reading strategies to increasingly

how Shakespeare develops complex characters through choices, relationships, conflict, and language. • **Theme:** Analyze how fate, free will, ambition, power, and responsibility develop and interact. • **Structure & Drama:** Evaluate how Shakespeare's structural choices contribute to meaning and tragic impact. • **Multiple Perspectives:** Evaluate competing interpretations of Macbeth's choices and responsibility. • **Argumentative Writing:** Develop a defensible claim supported by textual evidence, valid reasoning, and consideration of counterclaims.	complex language and syntax. • Continue selecting strong textual evidence, with greater emphasis on **evaluating which evidence best supports an interpretation**. • Extend analysis from identifying themes to examining **how multiple themes interact**. • Apply contextual reading skills from historical nonfiction to Jacobean beliefs and culture. • Build from explaining ideas in MP1 to **taking and defending a position** in MP2.

Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key 21st Century Skills

9.4.12.CI.1	Demonstrate the ability to reflect, analyze, and use creative skills and ideas (e.g., 1.1.12prof.CR3a).
9.2.12.CAP.2	Develop college and career readiness skills by participating in opportunities such as structured learning experiences, apprenticeships, and dual enrollment programs.
9.2.12.CAP.3	Investigate how continuing education contributes to one's career and personal growth.
9.4.12.CI.3	Investigate new challenges and opportunities for personal growth, advancement, and transition (e.g., 2.1.12.PGD.1).
9.4.12.CT.1	Identify problem-solving strategies used in the development of an innovative product or practice (e.g., 1.1.12acc.C1b, 2.2.12.PF.3).
9.4.12.CT.2	Explain the potential benefits of collaborating to enhance critical thinking and problem solving (e.g., 1.3E.12profCR3.a).
9.4.12.CT.4	Participate in online strategy and planning sessions for course-based, school-based, or other project and determine the strategies that contribute to effective outcomes.
9.2.12.CAP.13	Analyze how the economic, social, and political conditions of a time period can affect the labor market.
9.4.12.IML.1	Compare search browsers and recognize features that allow for filtering of information.
9.4.12.TL.1	Assess digital tools based on features such as accessibility options, capacities, and utility for accomplishing a specified task (e.g., W.11-12.6.).
9.4.12.TL.3	Analyze the effectiveness of the process and quality of collaborative environments.
9.4.12.TL.4	Collaborate in online learning communities or social networks or virtual worlds to analyze and propose a resolution to a real-world problem (e.g., 7.1.AL.IPERS.6).

Interdisciplinary Connections

How does this unit connect to standards in other disciplines? Add the appropriate **NJ SLS** here, keeping grade bands in mind. This is done by clicking "actions" and then "add standards".

1.4.2.Cr	Creating
2	Reason abstractly and quantitatively
3	Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others
G.C.A.4	Construct a tangent line from a point outside a given circle to the circle.
1.4.2.Cr2	Organizing and developing ideas.
8	Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning
1.4.2.Pr	Performing
1.4.2.Pr4	Selecting, analyzing, and interpreting work.
1.4.2.Pr6	Conveying meaning through art.
1.4.2.Re8	Interpreting intent and meaning.
G.SRT.A.1	Verify experimentally the properties of dilations given by a center and a scale factor:
1.4.2.Re9	Applying criteria to evaluate products.
1.4.2.Cn11	Relating artistic ideas and works within societal, cultural, and historical contexts to deepen understanding.
HS-PS2	Motion and Stability: Forces and Interactions
HS-PS2-6	Communicate scientific and technical information about why the molecular-level structure is important in the functioning of designed materials.
HS-LS3	Heredity: Inheritance and Variation of Traits
HS-LS3-3	Apply concepts of statistics and probability to explain the variation and distribution of expressed traits in a population.
HS-LS4	Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity
HS-LS4-4	Construct an explanation based on evidence for how natural selection leads to adaptation of populations.
HS-ESS3	Earth and Human Activity
HS-ESS3-1	Construct an explanation based on evidence for how the availability of natural resources, occurrence of natural hazards, and climate change have influenced human activity.
HS-ESS3-4	Evaluate or refine a technological solution that reduces impacts of human activities on climate change and other natural systems.
HS-ESS3-6	Use a computational representation to illustrate the relationships among Earth systems and how those relationships are being modified due to human activity (i.e., climate change).
SOC.9-12.1.1.1	Compare present and past events to evaluate the consequences of past decisions and to apply lessons learned.
SOC.9-12.1.2.2	Relate current events to the physical and human characteristics of places and regions.
SOC.9-12.1.3.3	Gather relevant information from multiple sources representing a wide range of views (including historians and experts) while using the date, context, and corroborative value of the sources to guide the selection.