

10.1.2

Lesson 5

Introduction

In this lesson, students read and analyze the next section of “The Palace Thief,” from “‘Well, young man,’ I said, knocking on the door frame” to “and trundled off to sit among his friends” (pp. 171–175). In this passage, Hundert confronts Sedgewick Bell about cheating in the “Mr. Julius Caesar” competition and develops a deeper understanding of Sedgewick’s character.

Students focus largely on figurative language and word choice in this lesson as they analyze the impact of word choice on the meaning and tone of the text in the days leading up to Sedgewick’s graduation. Students complete a brief written response to assess their analysis of how the author’s descriptive word choice further develops the characters of Sedgewick and Hundert. For homework, students select one example where the narrator’s “code of morals” is challenged and explain its context and impact on the narrator. Students also continue reading their AIR text through the lens of their new focus standards (RL/RI.9-10.2).

Standards

Assessed Standard(s)	
RL.9-10.3	Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.
RL.9-10.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).
L.9-10.5	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
Addressed Standard(s)	
RL.9-10.1	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Assessment

Assessment(s)
<p>The learning in this lesson is captured through a Quick Write at the end of the lesson. Students answer the following prompt based on the reading (citing evidence from the text and analyzing key words and phrases) completed in the lesson.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the narrator's descriptive word choice further develop the characters of Sedgewick and Hundert?
High Performance Response(s)
<p>A High Performance Response should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the moment in the text when Hundert demonstrates self-awareness of his primary character flaw, as well as his reflections that follow. Exhibit a confident usage and analysis of new words and phrases from the text that are used to describe Sedgewick Bell following Hundert's final conversation with the Senator.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> labyrinthine (adj.) – complicated; tortuous wiliness (n.) – craftiness, slyness precociousness (n.) – unusually advanced or mature in development, especially mental development audacity (n.) – boldness or daring, especially with confident or arrogant disregard for personal safety, conventional thought, or other restrictions omission (n.) – the act of leaving something out circumvent (v.) – to go around or bypass abominations (n.) – things that are greatly disliked amiably (adv.) – pleasantly tendrils (n.) – a threadlike, leafless organ of climbing plants, often growing in spiral form, which attaches itself to or twines round some other body, as to support the plant recalcitrance (n.) – disobedience infamy (n.) – extremely bad reputation timbre (n.) – the characteristic quality of sound produced by a particular instrument or voice; tone color

- crudities (n.) – offenses
- depravity (n.) – the state of being morally bad or evil; corruption
- feebleness (n.) – the state of being physically, intellectually, or morally weak
- trundled (v.) – moved heavily, noisily

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

- feline (adj.) – sly, stealthy, or treacherous
- waned (v.) – decreased in strength, intensity
- stride (n.) – a walk characterized by long steps, especially in a hasty or vigorous way
- strut (n.) – a walk suggesting pompousness or pride

Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	
Standards & Text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards: RL.9-10.3, RL.9-10.4, L.9-10.5, RL.9-10.1 • Text: “The Palace Thief,” by Ethan Canin (pp. 171–175). 	
Learning Sequence:	
1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda	1. 10%
2. Homework Accountability	2. 10%
3. Masterful Reading	3. 10%
4. Evidence-Based Discussion	4. 55%
5. Quick Write	5. 10%
6. Closing	6. 5%

Materials

- Student copies of 10.1 Common Core Learning Standards Tool (refer to 10.1.1 Lesson 1)
- Student copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist (refer to 10.1.1 Lesson 1)

Learning Sequence

How to Use the Learning Sequence	
Symbol	Type of Text & Interpretation of the Symbol
10%	Percentage indicates the percentage of lesson time each activity should take.
no symbol	Plain text indicates teacher action.
	Bold text indicates questions for the teacher to ask students.
	<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 assessed standards for this lesson: RL.9-10.3, RL.9-10.4, and L.9-10.5. In this lesson, students focus on the impact of language on the meaning and tone of the text in the days leading to Sedgewick's graduation. Students will respond to questions and participate in class discussion to develop a better understanding of the complex characters within the text.

- ▶ Students look at the agenda.

Inform students that they will begin working with two new standards in this lesson: RL.9-10.4 and L.9-10.5. Ask students to individually read these standards on the 10.1 Common Core Learning Standards Tool and assess their familiarity with and mastery of these standards.

- ▶ Students read standards RL.9-10.4 and L.9-10.5.

Instruct students to talk in pairs about what they think each standard means. Lead a brief discussion about these standards.

💬 Student responses may include the following:

- Determine the meaning of new words in the text from context (e.g., how words affect the meaning of a text, and what impact words have on the tone of a text).
- Understand word relationships.
- Understand and use figurative language.
- Determine nuances in word meanings.

❗ If necessary, consider reviewing key words like *tone*, *nuances*, *figurative language*, and *context* with students.

Activity 2: Homework Accountability

10%

Instruct students to talk in pairs about their responses to the homework writing prompt: How do the narrator's actions further develop and refine a central idea in the text?

- ▶ Students discuss their responses in pairs.
- 🗣 Student responses may include:
 - A central idea that emerges from the text and is supported by Hundert's actions is judgment can become clouded by ambition.
 - Hundert identifies himself as being "in a position of moral leadership" (p. 169), yet his desire to impress others, coupled with his inability to be confrontational, cloud his judgment and lead to "the sudden, indefensible urge to steer the contest in young Sedgewick Bell's direction" (p. 170).
 - He wants desperately to please Senator Bell, who shouts, "That's my boy!" (p. 169), but is quickly brought back to reality by "the presence of [Deepak's] mother" (p. 170).
 - At this point he does not necessarily make decisions based upon his own moral code; the guilt he would feel if Sedgewick won seems greater than the glory he would gain if Deepak lost.

Lead a brief share out on the previous lesson's AIR homework assignment. Select several students (or student pairs) to explain how they applied their new focus standards (RL/RI.9-10.2) to their AIR text.

- ▶ Students (or student pairs) discuss and then share how they applied their new focus standards (RL/RI.9-10.2) to their AIR text from the previous lesson's homework.

Activity 3: Masterful Reading

10%

Have students listen to a masterful reading from "'Well, young man,' I said, knocking on the door frame" to "and trundled off to sit among his friends" (pp. 171–175). At each listed vocabulary word, stop and provide a definition of the word for students to note.

Provide definitions for the following words as they appear during the masterful reading: *labyrinthine*, *wiliness*, *precociousness*, *audacity*, *omission*, *circumvent*, *abominations*, *amiably*, *tendrils*, *recalcitrance*, *infamy*, *timbre*, *crudities*, *depravity*, *feebleness*, and *trundled*.

① Consider displaying the key vocabulary and definitions for students to see throughout the lesson.

Instruct students to read along in their texts.

- ▶ Students follow along, reading silently.

Activity 4: Evidence-Based Discussion

55%

Introduce the Quick Write assessment prompt (How does the author's descriptive word choice further develop the characters of Sedgewick and Hundert?). Explain to students that this is the lesson assessment and the focus for today's reading.

- ▶ Students read the assessment prompt and listen.

① Display the Quick Write assessment prompt for students to see.

Direct students to form small, heterogeneous groups and to read and annotate the text from “‘Well, young man,’ I said, knocking on the door frame” to “and trundled off to sit among his friends” (pp. 171–175). Instruct students to focus on the figurative or particularly descriptive language that contributes to Hundert's character development and conflicting motivations.

- ▶ Student groups read and annotate.

① Consider a brief review of figurative language from the learning in Unit 1. Circulate around the room to ensure students are referring to the text in their conversations.

① Consider posting or distributing the annotation codes.

- ▶ Students annotations may include the following:

- * The situation challenges his abilities to enforce his “code of morals” (p. 172).
- * Hundert identifies how “chilling” it is to him that Sedgewick seems to know exactly what kind of “corruption” (p. 172) he's committed.
- * The narrator speaks of his waning conviction and “one criminal turning in another” (p. 172).
- * Hundert is in a “predicament” (p. 172) where he feels like “an exhausted swimmer trying to climb a slippery wall out of the sea” (p. 172).
- → Hundert uses the word “audacity” (p. 173) in describing the Senator's phone call. He also uses “audacity” (p. 172) to describe Sedgewick's allegation that Hundert fears the Senator.
- ! Hundert uses colorful language to describe Sedgewick, who he once felt obligated to help succeed, calling his quizzes “abominations” (p. 174) and his essays “pathetic digestions” (p. 174).
- * Sedgewick is “a symbol, evidence of the first tendrils of moral rot” (p. 174) that seem to be taking over St. Benedict's. The older generation of teachers think of Sedgewick with “mythic infamy” (p. 174).

- → All of Sedgewick's qualities that are nuisances to the teachers make him popular among students: "precocious evil," "bellowing timber," "crudities" (p. 174).
 - * Hundert tries to say he "held out hope for Sedgewick Bell" (p. 175) and then immediately describes his "fits of depravity" and "intellectual feebleness" (175).
 - * Hundert gazes disapprovingly at Sedgewick on graduation day. Sedgewick, unphased, "trundled off to sit among his friends" (p. 175).
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Ask student groups to discuss and record their answers to the following questions.

① Consider displaying the questions for student groups to discuss.

What language does Hundert use to describe Sedgewick after the confrontation around Sedgewick's cheating? What do these words tell you about Sedgewick?

💬 Student responses should include the following:

- Sedgewick is described as "precocious," and possessing "labyrinthine wiliness" (p. 171) (maze-like craftiness). Sedgewick is crafty and shrewd and acts, in many ways, older than he is.

How does the description of Sedgewick's "feline smile" on page 171 contribute to Hundert's analysis of Sedgewick's character?

💬 Sedgewick's actions were well thought-out, and he is almost proud of his cheating, as he smiles to acknowledge Hundert's subtle allegation. Hundert realizes that Sedgewick has no plans to try to get expelled, like most students (p. 171). This description sets Hundert up for the following conversation, where Hundert accuses Sedgewick of being intimidated by the Senator (pp. 171–172).

① **Differentiation Consideration:** If necessary, ask the following question to scaffold student understanding of the word *feline*.

In the passage thus far, has Sedgewick been described positively or negatively? Do you think the word *feline* (p. 171) then, has a positive or negative connotation?

💬 Thus far Sedgewick has been described negatively, so *feline* has a negative connotation.

Encourage students to try to substitute words for *feline*.

Describe Hundert's code of morals versus Sedgewick's.

- Hundert knows right from wrong but is too weak to act according to this knowledge. Sedgewick also knows the difference, but uses his power and “boorishness” to manipulate conflicted souls like Hundert.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle, consider leading a brief discussion of the following scaffolding questions:

What are “morals”? What then is a “code of morals” (p. 172)?

- Student responses may include the following:
 - Knowing the difference between good and bad, honesty and dishonesty
 - A kind of list of personal rules to live by in order to feel like a moral person

What sorts of words does the author use to describe the external and internal challenges to Hundert’s “code of morals” (p. 172)?

- Student responses may include the following:
 - Mr. Woodbridge, as headmaster of the school, is a symbol of Hundert’s value system, his “code of morals” (p. 172), yet he encourages him to throw the competition. He instructs him to “ignore” (p. 168) the cheating. Hundert is quick to dismiss Mr. Woodbridge’s corruption, comparing him to a soldier’s “captain” (p. 172).
 - Sedgewick now knows that Hundert, like himself, has acted dishonestly, referring to his “dark, accusatory gaze” (p. 172).
 - Hundert believes the right thing to do would be to turn in Sedgewick for his dishonesty, but he knows it is more complicated than this—referring to the situation as “one criminal turning in another” (p. 172).

How can Sedgewick’s cheating help you understand the definition of *waned* (p. 172)? How does the use of this word inform your understanding of Hundert?

- Student responses should include the following:
 - Because Hundert does not report Sedgewick’s behavior, the text suggests his conviction to do so goes away, helping to define *wane* to mean “shrink, die out, or decrease.”
 - The word is significant because it shows Hundert’s internal weakness; he wishes to enforce his moral code, but his own lapses in it prevent him from doing so.

What does the reflection “no sooner had I resolved to confront the Senator than it became perfectly clear to me that I lacked the character to do so” (p. 173) reveal about Hundert’s character?

- Student responses should include the following:

- This represents the moment in time when Hundert realizes his own essential character flaw—he is too weak to confront those more powerful than him, even if they call into question or compromise his own moral code.
- Both Sedgewick and his father are willing to confront Hundert. They must view him as weak, and their willingness to exploit this element of his character contributes to the perceived strength of theirs.

In the wake of Hundert’s conversation with the Senator, what do his actions reveal about his character versus the character of Sedgewick and the Senator?

🗨 Student responses may include the following:

- Sedgewick used to be described as a student who couldn’t seem to get a break under his “tyrant” father (p. 164). He was taken under Hundert’s wing and seemed to show real promise. Now, the language used to describe his character and his performance is insulting and offensive.
- Sedgewick is described as a “dismal” student, landing at the bottom of a class that the narrator claims is not as good as previous classes (p. 174).
- Sedgewick’s academic efforts are described as “abominations” and “pathetic digestions” (p. 174).
- Sedgewick becomes the symbol for a declining school; he represents the “first tendrils of moral rot” (p. 174) that seem to be plaguing St. Benedict’s.
- Sedgewick and Senator Bell might be characterized as bullies, but Hundert is a coward who hides behind his words when he can’t influence Sedgewick the way he wants.

Display the words *stride*, *strut*, and *trundle* and instruct students to re-read the sentences where these words appear: “His stride had become a strut” (p. 174) and “trundled off to sit among his friends” (p. 175). Instruct students to work in their groups to define the words, and to discuss what aspect of Sedgewick’s character the narrator conveys through them.

🗨 Student responses may include:

- The understanding that both *stride* and *strut* connote confidence, a reading supported by the other details in this paragraph. But *strut* is perhaps the stronger word; the narrator is attempting to show the change in Sedgewick’s behavior and social standing.
- *Trundle* is a different sort of word, almost suggesting clumsiness. The narrator seems to be pointing out Sedgewick’s unwillingness to take graduation seriously, a reading reinforced by his “flat” expression on stage (p. 175).

Lead a brief, full-class sharing of the definitions and the aspects they demonstrate. Post or provide the definitions of these words.

Activity 5: Quick Write

10%

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

How does the author’s descriptive word choice further develop the characters of Sedgewick and Hundert?

① Display the prompt for students to see, or provide the prompt in hard copy.

Instruct students to use two to four unit vocabulary words and evidence from the text in their responses.

Remind students to use the Short Response Rubric and Checklist to guide their written responses.

- ▶ Students independently answer the prompt using evidence from the text.
- 🗨 See the High Performance Response at the beginning of this lesson.

Activity 6: Closing

5%

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to select one example where the narrator’s “code of morals” (p. 172) is challenged and to explain its context and its impact on the narrator. Ask students to include one to three unit vocabulary words as they complete their homework.

Instruct students to continue their AIR through the lens of their focus standards (RI/RL.9-10.2). Students should come to class prepared for a 3–5 minute discussion of their text, based on that standard.

- ▶ Students follow along.

Homework

Select one example where the narrator’s “code of morals” (p. 172) is challenged, and explain its context and its impact on the narrator. Include one to three unit vocabulary words in your response. Continue your AIR using the language of the focus standards (RI/RL.9-10.2) to guide your reading. Come to class prepared for a 3–5 minute discussion at the beginning of the next lesson based on the focus standards.