

## 10.2.1

## Lesson 19

## Introduction

In this lesson, students read “Women,” a poem by the contemporary writer, Alice Walker. Students work in pairs to analyze Walker’s poem before working in small groups to consider how the poem develops ideas similar to those that Martin Luther King, Jr. developed in his “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” After a brief, whole-class discussion, teachers assess student learning via a Quick Write on the following prompt: How does Walker develop a central idea also present in King’s letter? For homework, students review the texts they have read over the course of this module, as well as their notes and annotations, to find evidence of a central idea that all of the authors develop in their work.

## Standards

Assessed Standard(s)	
RL.9-10.2	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
Addressed Standard(s)	
W.9-10.9.a	<p>Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.</p> <p>a. Apply <i>grades 9-10 Reading standards</i> to literature (e.g., “Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work [e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare]”).</p>
SL.9-10.1.a-e	<p>Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues</i>, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>b. Work with peers to set rules for collegial discussions and decision-making (e.g., informal consensus, taking votes on key issues, presentation of alternate views), clear goals and deadlines, and individual roles as needed.</p>

	<p>c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.</p> <p>d. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.</p> <p>e. Seek to understand other perspectives and cultures and communicate effectively with audiences or individuals from varied backgrounds.</p>
L.9-10.4.a, b	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>b. Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., <i>analyze, analysis, analytical; advocate, advocacy</i>).</p>
L.9-10.5.a	<p>Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.</p> <p>a. Interpret figures of speech (e.g., euphemism, oxymoron) in context and analyze their role in the text.</p>

## Assessment

<b>Assessment(s)</b>
<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does Walker develop a central idea also present in King’s letter?</li> </ul>
<b>High Performance Response(s)</b>
<p>A High Performance Response should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify a central idea in Walker’s poem (e.g., women fighting for “a place” (line 21), including education, for the next generation in order to have more equal opportunities; the need for education to participate in society fully; courage; the struggle for human rights; etc.).</li> <li>Explain how Walker develops this idea (e.g., Walker develops the idea of women fighting to gain “a place for us” by describing the women with military imagery, such as “Headragged generals” (line 14), “mined / Fields,” and “Booby-trapped / Ditches” (lines 15–18); she also uses violent imagery,</li> </ul>

including her description of the women’s “fists” (line 5) and how they “battered down / Doors” (lines 7–8); she describes the women’s struggles to find “A place for us” (line 21) when she describes “How they knew what we / Must know / Without knowing a page / Of it / Themselves” (lines 22–26); etc.).

- Explain how King develops the same idea in his letter (e.g., King also depicts strong heroic women who might not have been educated but who knew how to struggle for “a place” when he mentions the “old, oppressed, battered Negro women, symbolized in a seventy-two-year-old woman . . . who rose up with a sense of dignity . . . and responded . . . with ungrammatical profundity, “My feet is tired, but my soul is rested”” (par. 37); etc.).

## Vocabulary

<b>Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• starched (adj.) – made clothing stiff by using a powder or liquid substance called starch</li> </ul>
<b>Vocabulary to teach (may include direct word work and/or text-dependent questions)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• husky (adj.) – harsh, gruff, rasping, throaty</li> <li>• stout (adj.) – bold or brave</li> <li>• headragged (adj.) – having a piece of cloth covering the head</li> </ul>

## Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
<b>Standards &amp; Text:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standards: RL.9-10.2, W.9-10.9.a, SL.9-10.1.a-e, L.9-10.4.a, b, L.9-10.5.a</li> <li>• Text: “Women” by Alice Walker (<a href="http://www.nexuslearning.net/">http://www.nexuslearning.net/</a>) and “Letter from Birmingham Jail” by Martin Luther King, Jr.</li> </ul>	
<b>Learning Sequence:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda</li> <li>2. Homework Accountability</li> <li>3. Masterful Reading</li> <li>4. Reading and Discussion</li> <li>5. Small Group Discussion</li> <li>6. Quick Write</li> <li>7. Closing</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 5%</li> <li>2. 10%</li> <li>3. 10%</li> <li>4. 20%</li> <li>5. 40%</li> <li>6. 10%</li> <li>7. 5%</li> </ol>

## Materials

- Copies of the poem “Women” by Alice Walker for each student (with lines numbered 1–26)
- Student copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist (refer to 10.2.1 Lesson 1)
- Copies of the Evidence Collection Tool for each student

① Consider numbering the lines of “Women” before the lesson.

## 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 text dependent questions.</b>
	<i>Italicized text indicates a vocabulary word.</i>
▶	Indicates student action(s).
☞	Indicates possible student response(s) to teacher questions.
①	Indicates instructional notes for the teacher.

### Activity 1: Introduction of Lesson Agenda

5%

Begin by reviewing the agenda and the assessed standard for this lesson: RL.9-10.2. In this lesson students read “Women,” a poem by Alice Walker, and analyze the text in pairs before working in small groups to consider how Walker and King develop similar ideas.

- ▶ Students look at the agenda.

### Activity 2: Homework Accountability

10%

Instruct students to talk in pairs about how they applied their focus standard to their text. 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 focus standard to their AIR text.

- ▶ Students (or student pairs) discuss and then share how they applied their focus standard to their AIR text.

Instruct students to share and compare the facts they found about Alice Walker and their ideas about how these facts might influence her writing.

☞ Student responses may include:

- Walker was born before the civil rights movement took place, so she might be influenced by experiences of prejudice and bigotry.
- She was blind in one eye and got a scholarship for the disabled, so she might be sensitive to people who experience challenge.
- She is an African American civil rights activist, so she might write about the civil rights movement.
- She is a feminist, so she may write about issues of power or groups of people who do not have power.

### Activity 3: Masterful Reading

**10%**

Have students listen to a Masterful Reading of “Women,” by Alice Walker. Ask students to follow along and listen for Walker’s use of powerful images.

- ▶ Students follow along, reading silently.

Instruct students to form pairs and share ideas they noted.

☞ Student responses may include:

- Women’s fists “battered down / Doors” (lines 7–8).
- Women ironing “starched white / Shirts” (lines 10–11).
- Women in headrags leading armies “across mined fields” (lines 15–16).
- Classrooms full of desks and books (lines 19–20).

### Activity 4: Reading and Discussion

**20%**

Explain to students that throughout the discussion, they are to stop and take notes about what has been discussed in preparation for a Quick Write assessment at the end of the lesson. Instruct students to take notes in their notebooks or add to their text annotations.

- ▶ Students listen.

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

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

Instruct student pairs to reread the poem and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

**What do you notice about the length of stanza(s) and lines in the poem?**

- Student responses should include:
  - The poem consists of only one stanza.
  - The lines are very short.
  - Some lines consist of a single word.

**What do you notice about Walker’s use of punctuation and capital letters?**

- Student responses should include:
  - Walker uses only a single period at the end of the poem.
  - Walker uses capital letters at the beginning of each line.

**How does the structure of Walker’s poem (line lengths and punctuation) relate to its content?**

- The structure is simple and direct, like the women Walker describes.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

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

**What or whom is the subject of Walker’s poem?**

- Walker’s poem is about the women of the speaker’s “mama’s generation” (line 2).

**How does the speaker describe the women?**

- Student responses should include:
  - They were “husky of voice” (line 3).
  - They were “stout of / Step” (lines 3–4).
  - They were “headragged” (line 14).

① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle with the word *headragged*, suggest they break it into recognizable words and use those words to define the whole.

- The words *head* and *rag* show that the word *headragged* means wearing a rag or piece of cloth on the head.

- ① Consider drawing students' attention to their work with L.9-10.4.b as they use word parts to determine the meaning of a word.

### How does Walker describe the women's actions?

- 🗨 Student responses should include:
- They “battered down / Doors” (lines 7–8).
  - They “ironed / Starched white / Shirts” (lines 9–11).
  - “[T]hey led / Armies . . . Across mined / Fields” (lines 12–16).
  - They “discover[ed] books / Desks / A place for us” (lines 19–21).

Provide students with the following definition: *starched* means “made clothing stiff by using a powder or liquid substance called starch.”

- ▶ Students write the definition of *starched* on their copy of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

### How does Walker use metaphor to develop her portrait of the women?

- 🗨 Walker uses a military metaphor, comparing the women to “headragged generals” (line 14) and the fields to “booby-trapped ditches” (lines 17–18) to emphasize the women's courage and leadership and to depict the dangerous aspects of their efforts.
- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students have difficulty answering this question, consider first asking the following questions:

#### To what does Walker compare the women in line 14?

- 🗨 Walker compares the women to “headragged generals” (line 14).

#### To what does Walker compare the fields where the women work in lines 17–18?

- 🗨 Walker compares the fields to “booby-trapped ditches” (lines 17–18).

- ① Consider drawing students' attention to their application of standard L.9-10.5.a through the process of interpreting figures of speech and analyzing their role in the text.

### What is the role of the imagery in lines 15–18 of the poem?

- 🗨 The imagery emphasizes the danger of the women's efforts and their courage.
- ① If necessary, remind students of their work with imagery in Module 10.1 and throughout 10.2.1, reminding them that imagery is the use of figurative or sensory language to create a mental picture or feeling.

**What is the cumulative impact of Walker’s descriptions of the women and their actions on the meaning and tone of the poem?**

🗨 Student responses may include:

- The words Walker uses to describe the women makes them sound traditionally masculine; the descriptions make it clear that these are strong, tough women.
- The women are active and strong; most of the activities sound adventurous or military.
- The women are active participants who fight to improve the lives of their children.

**Based on your responses to the previous question, what can you infer about the meaning of “husky of voice” and “stout of step” in lines 3–4?**

🗨 “Husky of voice” (line 3) probably means that the women had deep, rough voices and “stout of step” (lines 3–4) means the women walked with strong steps.

① Some students may notice that these phrases have slightly masculine connotations.

Confirm correct student understandings and define *husky* as “harsh, gruff, rasping, throaty” and *stout* as “bold or brave.”

- ▶ Students write the definitions of *husky* and *stout* on their copy of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

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

**How does Walker use these physical characteristics to depict inner qualities of the women she describes?**

🗨 The physical qualities suggest that the women have strength. Walker uses these images of strength to portray the women as strong, both in body and in character.

**What reason does the speaker give for the women’s actions?**

🗨 The women wanted “to discover books / Desks / A place for us” (lines 19–21).

**What is the women’s goal?**

🗨 The goal of the women is to provide their children with better opportunities for education: “books / Desks” (lines 19–20) and for participating fully in society: “A place for us” (line 21).

① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle to answer this question, consider asking the following question:

**What do the physical objects of “books / Desks / A place” represent?**



- The “books / Desks / A place for us” (lines 19–21) represent the larger goals of access to education for their children and “a place” not just in school, but also in society.

### What is the impact of repetition in the final four lines of the poem?

- Walker uses variations of the word *know* (*knew*, *know*, *knowing*, lines 22–24) to emphasize both the wisdom of the women she describes and the value they placed on education and access for their children.

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle to answer this question, consider asking the following questions:

#### What did the women know, according to the speaker of the poem?

- According to the speaker, “they knew what we / Must know” (lines 22–23).

#### What inference can you make about the women based on this information?

- The women knew that their children must be educated; have access to the desks and books they are discovering.

#### What did the women not know?

- They did not know “a page / Of it / Themselves” (lines 24–26).

#### What inference can you make about the women based on this information?

- Many of the women were uneducated themselves.

#### How does this information impact the meaning of the poem?

- Because the women worked so hard to get books and desks for their children, even though they couldn’t read themselves, it is clear that the women valued education and wanted something better for their children.

### What central idea does Walker develop in this poem?

- Student responses may include:
  - African American women of the past worked hard to get a better future for their children.
  - The women of the poem were heroic.
  - Education is necessary for finding “a place” in society.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses to establish student understanding of the content and style of Walker’s poem.

## Activity 5: Small Group Discussion

40%

Instruct students to form small groups. Post or project each set of questions below for students to discuss in small groups.

① Consider reminding students that this is an opportunity to apply standard SL.9-10.1.a-e.

### How does the structure of King’s letter as a whole differ from the structure of Walker’s poem?

🗨️ Student responses may include:

- King’s letter has many paragraphs, but Walker’s poem is a single stanza.
- King’s letter uses many long sentences, along with shorter sentences, and high-level vocabulary, while Walker’s poem uses short lines and more basic vocabulary.

### In what ways are King’s letter and Walker’s poem similar?

🗨️ Student responses may include:

- Both texts describe people overcoming difficulties to achieve a better future.
- Both texts describe struggles for access to freedom or a better place.

### What is a purpose evident in both King’s letter and Walker’s poem?

🗨️ Both King and Walker wrote texts with the purpose of advancing the rights of people who had limited access to opportunities in society.

Instruct students to reread King, paragraph 11 (from “We know through painful experience” to “our legitimate and unavoidable impatience”) along with their notes and annotations and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

### Identify ideas that King develops and refines in paragraph 11.

🗨️ Student responses may include:

- King develops the idea that the oppressor never voluntarily gives freedom to the oppressed.
- King describes the oppression that African Americans have experienced while waiting for freedom.
- King describes the struggle against “a degenerating sense of ‘nobodyness’” (par. 11)

### In what ways does Walker’s poem develop ideas similar to those that King develops in this paragraph?

🗨️ Student responses may include:

- Walker develops the image of women leading a fight for freedom of education.
- Walker describes the hard work of an earlier generation.
- Walker describes women who have not lost the struggle against a sense of nobodyness.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

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Instruct students to reread King, paragraph 22 (from “You spoke of our activity in Birmingham” to “to a frightening racial nightmare”) along with their notes and annotations and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

**What two forces does King describe in this paragraph?**

🗨 Student responses should include:

- “[A] force of complacency made up of Negroes who . . . have been so completely drained of self-respect and a sense of ‘somebodyness’ that they have adjusted to segregation” (par. 22).
- A force of “bitterness and hatred and comes perilously close to advocating violence . . . It is made up of people who have lost faith in America” (par. 22).

**What evidence does Walker provide to suggest that the women she describes are similar to or different from what King refers to as a “force of complacency”?**

🗨 Student responses may include:

- The women are different from King’s “force of complacency” (King, par. 22) because Walker describes them as “stout of / Step” (Walker, lines 3–4) and as “Headragged generals” (Walker, line 14) who “led / Armies,” (Walker, lines 12–13) so they are not “drained of self-respect and a sense of ‘somebodyness’” (King, par. 22).
- The women are different because they are still fighting oppression, so they have not “adjusted to segregation” (King, par. 22).

**What evidence does Walker provide to suggest that the women she describes are similar to or different from King’s “force of bitterness and hatred”?**

🗨 Student responses may include:

- The women are different from this force because the violence is figurative, not literal.
- The women are different because the women have not “lost faith in America” (King, par. 22). They are working to gain “A place for us” (Walker, line 21).

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

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Instruct students to reread King, paragraph 34 (from “I hope the church as a whole” to “in our echoing demands”) along with their notes and annotations and answer the following question before sharing out with the class.

**In what ways do the women Walker describes belong to the “destiny of America” that King describes?**

🗨 Student responses may include:

- The women are described as active and strong, with “stout of / Step” in lines 3–4 and leading armies in lines 12–18; King describes the “bottomless vitality” of African-Americans as they “continue to thrive and develop” (King, par. 34).
- King describes the foreparents of the demonstrators as people who “labored here without wages” (King, par. 34). The women in Walker’s labor by ironing “Starched white / Shirts” (Walker, lines 10–11) and in fields.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses so that students can identify ways in which King and Walker treat similar ideas.

**Activity 6: Quick Write****10%**

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

**How does Walker develop a central idea also present in King’s letter?**

Instruct students to look at the poem along with their notes and annotations to find evidence. Ask students to use this lesson’s vocabulary wherever possible in their written responses and to establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone. Remind students to use the Short Response Rubric and Checklist to guide their written responses.

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

- ▶ Students independently answer the prompt using evidence from the text.

🗨 See the High Performance Response at the beginning of this lesson.

**Activity 7: Closing****5%**

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to review “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” along with their notes, tools, Quick Writes, and annotations to identify the claims King makes in his letter. Then, students use the Evidence Collection Tool to identify three important claims King makes and analyze how he develops and refines these claims across the letter.

- ▶ Students follow along.

## Homework

Review Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail," along with your tools, notes, Quick Writes, and annotations. Use the Evidence Collection Tool to identify three important claims King makes and analyze how he develops and refines these claims across the letter.

## Evidence Collection Tool

<b>Name:</b>		<b>Class:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
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**Directions:** Review Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” along with your tools, notes, Quick Writes, and annotations. Identify three important claims King makes and analyze how he develops and refines these claims across the letter. In column 1, record the claims. In column 2, record the evidence and reasoning that supports the claims. In column 3, record your analysis of how King develops and refines the claims.

Claim	Support	Comments