

11.2.1

Lesson 3

Introduction

In this lesson, students read and analyze the second half of paragraph 2 of “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” from *The Souls of Black Folk* (from “I had thereafter no desire to tear down” to “watch the streak of blue above”). In this excerpt, Du Bois develops his metaphor of the “veil” as he describes the experience of being an “outcast and a stranger” in the “pale world” (par. 2). Students analyze Du Bois’s use of figurative language, determining meaning from context, and analyzing the role this language plays in the text. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: Interpret an example of figurative language and analyze its role in the excerpt.

For homework, students reread this lesson’s excerpt, and record ideas that emerge in this passage on their Ideas Tracking Tools. Additionally, students begin reading their Accountable Independent Reading (AIR) texts through the lens of a new focus standard (RI.11-12.3) and prepare for a 3–5 minute discussion on how they applied their new focus standard to their texts.

Standards

Assessed Standard(s)	
L.11-12.5.a	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. a. Interpret figures of speech (e.g., hyperbole, paradox) in context and analyze their role in the text.
Addressed Standard(s)	
W.11-12.9.b	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. b. Apply <i>grades 11-12 Reading standards</i> to literary nonfiction (e.g., “Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S. texts, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning [e.g., in U.S. Supreme Court Case majority opinions and dissents] and the premises, purposes, and arguments in works of public advocacy [e.g., <i>The Federalist</i> , presidential addresses]”).
L.11-12.4.a	Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on <i>grades 11-12 reading and content</i> , choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

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| | 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.

- Interpret an example of figurative language and analyze its role in this excerpt.

High Performance Response(s)

A High Performance Response should:

- Identify an example of figurative language in this passage (e.g., the “region of blue sky” (par.2)).
- Interpret the meaning of this figurative language from context (e.g., The “region of blue sky” represents the time in Du Bois’s childhood when he is not bothered by the realization that “[he] was different from the others” (par. 2).).
- Analyze the role this figurative language plays in the excerpt (e.g., The “region of blue sky” develops the metaphor of the “vast veil” that shuts Du Bois and “other black boys” out of the “pale world” (par. 2), because it introduces the idea that as a child Du Bois was able to live peacefully “above” the veil (par. 2). However, as Du Bois grows older he is unable to rise above those who exclude him, and so he feels trapped, hopeless, and angry. He can only “watch the streak of blue above,” as he “plod[s] darkly on in resignation” (par. 2) with the “other black boys” who feel “distrust” and “hatred” for the white world.).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)

- mates (n.) – associates, companions
- alas (interjection) – used as an exclamation to express sorrow, grief, pity, concern, or apprehension of evil
- strife (n) – vigorous or bitter conflict, discord, or antagonism
- sycophancy (n.) – the character or behavior of a person who praises powerful people in order to get their approval
- plod (v.) – to walk slowly and usually heavily
- resignation (n.) – the feeling that something unpleasant is going to happen and cannot be changed

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unavailing (adj.) – not useful or successful
Vocabulary to teach (may include direct word work and/or questions)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contempt (n.) – a feeling that someone or something is not worth any respect or approval • wrest (v.) – to twist or turn; pull, jerk, or force by a violent twist • unscalable (adj.) – not capable of being climbed up or reached
Additional vocabulary to support English Language Learners (to provide directly)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dazzling (adj.) – greatly impressive or surprising by being very attractive or exciting • mocking (adj.) – showing the qualities of laughing at or making fun of (someone or something) especially by copying an action or a way of behaving or speaking • outcast (n.) – someone who is not accepted by other people

Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
Standards & Text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards: L.11-12.5.a, W.11-12.9.b, L.11-12.4.a • Text: <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> by W.E.B. Du Bois, Chapter 1: “Of Our Spiritual Strivings,” paragraph 2 	
Learning Sequence: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda 2. Homework Accountability 3. Masterful Reading 4. Reading and Discussion 5. Quick Write 6. Closing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 5% 2. 10% 3. 5% 4. 60% 5. 10% 6. 10%

Materials

- Student copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist (refer to 11.2.1 Lesson 1)
- Student copies of Ideas Tracking Tool (refer to 11.2.1 Lesson 2)—students may need additional blank copies

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

5%

Begin by reviewing the agenda and assessed standard for this lesson: L.11-12.5.a. In this lesson, students explore Du Bois's use of figurative language, and analyze the role this language plays in the text.

- ▶ Students look at the agenda.

❗ Students were introduced to L.11-12.5.a in 11.1.2 Lesson 11.

Explain to students that they will apply their understanding of RL.11-12.5 in their analysis of this lesson's excerpt. Instruct students to talk in pairs about the meaning of figurative language.

- ▶ Students discuss their understanding of figurative language in pairs.
- 💬 Figurative language includes words that mean something different from their literal meaning. Figurative language can also be understood as language used by writers to produce images for readers, as with metaphors or personification.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Activity 2: Homework Accountability

10%

Instruct students to form pairs and share the additions they made to their Ideas Tracking Tool from the previous lesson's homework. (Reread from "Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question" to "but shut out from their world by a vast veil" (par. 1–2), and use the Ideas Tracking Tool to track at least two ideas that emerge in paragraphs 1–2, as well as notes and connections for each.)

- ▶ Students discuss the additions they made to their Ideas Tracking Tools.
- 💬 See the Model Ideas Tracking Tool at the end of this lesson.

Instruct students to share the vocabulary words they identified and defined in the previous lesson's homework in pairs. (Preview the remainder of par. 2 of "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" (from "I had thereafter no desire to tear down" to "watch the streak of blue above"). Box any unfamiliar words and look up their definitions. Choose the definition that makes the most sense in context, and write a brief definition above or near the word in the text.)

- Students may identify the following words: *mates, alas, strife, sycophancy, plod, resignation, unavailing.*

① Definitions are provided in the Vocabulary box in this lesson.

Activity 3: Masterful Reading

5%

Have students listen to a masterful reading of the second half of paragraph 2 of "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" (from "I had thereafter no desire to tear down" through "watch the streak of blue above").

- Students follow along, reading silently.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider posting or projecting the following guiding question to support students throughout this lesson:

How does Du Bois use figurative language in this passage to further develop his ideas?

Activity 4: Reading and Discussion

60%

Instruct students to form pairs. Post or project each set of questions below for students to discuss. Instruct students to continue to annotate the text as they read and discuss.

① This annotation supports students' engagement with W.11-12.9.b, which addresses the use of textual evidence in writing.

Instruct student pairs to read from "I had thereafter no desire to tear down" to "the wonderful tales that swam in my head, —some way" (par. 2), and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the following definition: *dazzling* means "greatly impressive or surprising by being very attractive or exciting."

- Students write the definition of *dazzling* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

How does Du Bois react to the revelation that he is "shut out from their world by a vast veil"?

- After realizing that he is "shut out from their world by a vast veil," Du Bois does not want to "tear down that veil" or to "creep through." Instead he holds everything "beyond" the veil in

“common contempt.” Rather than feeling like he wants to be a part of the world that excludes him, Du Bois feels dislike or disrespect for this world and prefers to stay outside of it.

What imagery does Du Bois use to describe where he “live[s]” (par. 2)? What effect does this imagery create in the passage?

🗨 Du Bois describes his life “above” the veil as a “region of blue sky and great wandering shadows” (par. 2). This creates the effect of a cheerful and untroubled space, but one that also contains something darker and unknown.

① Students worked with imagery in 11.1.2 Lesson 4. Consider reminding students that *imagery* is an author’s use of vivid, descriptive language that appeals to the senses. Imagery is a type of figurative language.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle to make meaning of the relationship between “veil” and the “blue sky,” consider posing the following scaffolding question:

Where does Du Bois “live[]” in relation to the veil?

🗨 Du Bois writes that he “lived above” the veil in a “region of blue sky.”

In what ways does Du Bois use the word “beat” in the sentence beginning “That sky was bluest”?

🗨 Du Bois “beat [his] mates at examination time, or beat them at a foot race.” This means that he won competitions in school and play. Du Bois also states that he “beat their stringy heads,” which means to physically assault someone.

How do these details help you to understand what Du Bois means by “common contempt”?

🗨 Du Bois’s description of the joy he feels when he wins against the other boys and beats them up indicates that “common contempt” means that he feels a broad or “common” dislike or hatred of them that makes him want to “beat their stringy heads,” and makes him feel joy in beating them.

① Consider drawing students’ attention to their application of standard L.11-12.4.a through the process of using context as a clue to determine the meaning of a phrase.

① If students struggle to make meaning of this phrase from context, provide the following definition: *contempt* means “a feeling that someone or something is not worth any respect or approval.”

① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle with the questions above, provide the following scaffolding question:

Who or what is “beyond” the veil?

🗨 “[T]he other world” (par. 1) or “their world” that Du Bois is “shut out from” is beyond the veil.

What did Du Bois hold in “common contempt”?

- Du Bois writes that he held “all beyond the veil” in “common contempt”; therefore, he felt dislike or disrespect for “the other world” (par. 1) or the white world from which he is excluded.

Why does Du Bois say “[t]hat sky was bluest” when he “beat[s]” his “mates”?

- Du Bois says “[t]hat sky was bluest” when he wins competitions against his peers, because when he “beats” his “mates” he is able to live “above” them in the “region of blue sky.” This suggests that when Du Bois wins in competitions against his peers, he does not care about being “shut out” from “their world” and, therefore, feels less concerned with the boundaries of the veil.

How does Du Bois use the image of “blue sky” to introduce a new idea in this passage?

- Student responses may include:
 - The image of the “blue sky” (par. 2) introduces the idea that when Du Bois feels like “the other world” (par. 1) is below him (such as when he looks on his mates with “common contempt” in par. 2), he feels less bothered by the fact that he is “shut out from their world” (par. 2).
 - The image of the “blue sky” (par. 2) introduces the idea that there is an escape from the boundaries of Du Bois’s world and “the other world” (par. 1).

Why does Du Bois’s “contempt” begin to fade?

- The “common contempt” Du Bois feels as a child begins “to fade”, because he realizes that all the “dazzling opportunities” that he values are for his “mates” and not for him.

How does Du Bois respond to this realization?

- Student responses may include:
 - Du Bois is determined to “wrest” the “prizes” and “opportunities” from the other boys.
 - Du Bois decides that he will become a lawyer, a doctor, or someone who “tell[s] the wonderful tales that swam” in his head, like a speaker or a writer.

① If students struggle with this analysis, consider posing the following scaffolding question:

What does Du Bois want to “wrest” from his “mates”? What is the meaning of *wrest* in this context?

- The phrase “[b]ut they should not keep these prizes” indicates that the action *wrest* means to take something from someone. Du Bois wants to take from his classmates their “prizes” or “opportunities.”

- ① Consider drawing students' attention to their application of standard L.11-12.4.a through the process of using context as a clue to determine the meaning of a word.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Instruct student pairs to read from "With other black boys the strife was not so fiercely sunny" to "watch the streak of blue above," and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the following definitions: *mocking* means "showing the qualities of laughing at or making fun of (someone or something) especially by copying an action or a way of behaving or speaking" and *outcast* means "someone who is not accepted by other people."

- ▶ Students write the definitions of *mocking* and *outcast* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

How does Du Bois describe the "strife" of "other black boys"? What effect did this "strife" have on the "other black boys"?

- ☛ Du Bois describes the "strife" of the "other black boys" as "not so fiercely sunny." Du Bois describes the childhood of the "other black boys" as a process of "shr[inking]" rather than one of growth, because it is filled with feelings of "hatred" and "mocking distrust." This indicates that this "strife" caused the "other black boys" to feel anger, bitterness, and distrust for the "other world."

What does Du Bois's use of the word "other," to describe "other black boys," imply about his own experience with "strife"?

- ☛ Du Bois's use of the word "other" sets him apart from the other boys he describes, implying that as a child Du Bois had the opportunity to live sometimes "above the veil" in the "blue sky," while "other black boys" who did not have similar opportunities could only yearn "hopelessly" for life above the veil.

What do the reactions of the "other black boys" (par. 2) suggest about who lives in "the other world" (par. 1)?

- ☛ Du Bois's description of the boys' "silent hatred of the pale world" and their "mocking distrust of everything white" (par. 2) suggests that "the other world" (par. 1) is occupied by white people, and that these boys are shut out from this world because they are "black" (par. 2).

How does the metaphor of the “vast veil” help you to understand what Du Bois means by “mine own house”?

- The “vast veil” is a metaphor that represents Du Bois’s separation from the white world, a separation that one does not feel “in Europe.” Du Bois experiences being “shut out from their world by a vast veil,” just as the “other black boys” find themselves to be strangers in their “own house,” or in America.

How does Du Bois describe the “house”?

- Du Bois uses the images of “shades ... clos[ing]” and “walls strait and stubborn ... relentlessly narrow, tall” to describe the “house” as a confining and impenetrable “prison-house.”

Who is inside the “prison-house”?

- Du Bois writes that the prison-house “closed round about us all.” Du Bois is in “the prison-house,” as are “the sons of night,” who are the “other black boys” who had less happy childhoods than Du Bois.
- ① If students struggle to make the connection between the “sons of night” and the African American community, consider posing the following scaffolding question:

Who are the “sons of night”?

- The “sons of night” is a description of the African-American community; they are the “other black boys” for whom “the strife was not so fiercely sunny.”

What was *unscalable* to the “sons of night”? What does this use suggest about the meaning of *unscalable*?

- The “sons of night” cannot climb the walls of the “prison-house.” The description of the walls as “narrow, tall,” and of the “sons of night” as “beat[ing] unavailing palms against the stone,” indicate that *unscalable* means “not capable of being climbed up or reached.” Therefore, Du Bois and the “other black boys” are trapped within a prison that they cannot escape.
- ① Consider drawing students’ attention to their application of standard L.11-12.4.a through the process of using context as a clue to the meaning of a phrase.

What effect does the image of the “prison-house” create? What does this suggest about the role of the “prison-house” metaphor in this passage?

- Student responses should include:
 - The image of the “prison-house” creates the effect of hopelessness, confinement, and despair.

- This effect suggests that the role of the “prison-house” metaphor is to communicate feelings of “resignation” and “hopeless[ness]” that accompany exclusion from the white world. Du Bois uses the “prison-house” metaphor to develop the idea that America feels like a constraining and inescapable prison for African Americans.

How does the image of the “streak of blue above” refine Du Bois’s description of the “sons of night”?

- 🗨 Du Bois returns to the image of the “blue sky” in his description of African Americans trapped in the “prison-house” and “half hopelessly, watch[ing] the streak of blue above,” in order to illustrate that the “sons of night” cannot “live[] above” the “veil” in a “region of blue sky.”

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Activity 5: Quick Write

10%

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

Interpret an example of figurative language and analyze its role in this excerpt.

Instruct students to look at their annotations to find evidence. Instruct students to use this lesson’s vocabulary whenever 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 6: Closing

10%

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to reread paragraph 2 (from “I had thereafter no desire to tear down” to “watch the streak of blue above”) and add at least one new idea to their Ideas Tracking Tool.

- ▶ Students follow along.

Introduce standard RI.11-12.3 as a focus standard to guide students’ AIR, and model what applying a focus standard looks like. Instruct students to prepare for a brief 3–5 minute discussion about how they applied the language of the standards to their reading.

For example, RI.11-12.3 asks students to “Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.” Students who read “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” might say, “In paragraph 2, Du Bois describes a sequence of childhood events in which his visiting-card was “refused ... peremptorily, with a glance” by a girl he went to school with. This incident made Du Bois realize that he was “different from the others” (par. 2) and led to his understanding that he is “shut out” (par. 2) from the white world because of the color of his skin.

► Students listen.

① Students reading literature should read through the lens of a focus standard of their choice.

Homework

Reread paragraph 2 (from “I had thereafter no desire to tear down” to “watch the streak of blue above”) and add at least one new idea to your Ideas Tracking Tool. Also, continue reading your Accountable Independent Reading text through the lens of the focus standard (RI.11-12.3) and prepare for a 3–5 minute discussion of your text based on that standard.

Model Ideas Tracking Tool

Name:		Class:		Date:	
Text:	"Of Our Spiritual Strivings" from <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> by W.E.B. Du Bois				
Directions: Identify the ideas that you encounter throughout the text. Trace the development of those ideas by noting how the author introduces, develops, or refines these ideas in the texts. Cite textual evidence to support your work.					
Paragraph #	Ideas	Notes and Connections			
1	Other people see Du Bois as "a problem" (par. 1).	Du Bois introduces this idea by stating that between him and "others" exists "ever an unasked question ... How does it feel to be a problem?" (par. 1).			
2	There is an "other world" (par. 1) that Du Bois is "shut out from" (par. 2).	Du Bois develops this idea through the childhood story of the girl who "refused" his visiting-cards "peremptorily, with a glance" (par. 2). Du Bois learned from this experience that he "was different from the others ... shut out from their world by a vast veil" (par. 2).			