

11.2.2

Lesson 9

Introduction

In this lesson, students are introduced to Audre Lorde’s contemporary poem “From the House of Yemanjá,” and read and analyze the first stanza (from “My mother had two faces and a frying pot” through “sun and moon and forever hungry / for her eyes”). In this stanza, the speaker describes her complex relationship with her mother and how this relationship influences her identity. Students determine the connotative and figurative meanings of words and phrases as they are used in the text, and analyze how these specific word choices shape the meaning of the first stanza.

Students demonstrate their learning at the end of this lesson in a Quick Write response to the following prompt: Determine the meaning of a word or phrase as it is used in stanza 1, and analyze how this specific word choice impacts the meaning of the first stanza. For homework, students record at least one idea introduced and developed in stanza 1 on their Ideas Tracking Tools, and continue their Accountable Independent Reading (AIR) through the lens of the focus standard of their choice.

Standards

Assessed Standard(s)	
RL.11-12.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)
Addressed Standard(s)	
W.11-12.9.a	<p>Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.</p> <p>a. Apply <i>grades 11–12 Reading standards</i> to literature (e.g., “Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics”).</p>

Assessment

Assessment(s)
<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"> Determine the meaning of a word or phrase as it is used in stanza 1, and analyze how this specific word choice impacts the meaning of the first stanza.
High Performance Response(s)
<p>A High Performance Response should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine the meaning of a word or phrase as it is used in stanza 1 (e.g., In stanza 1, the phrase “forever hungry / for her eyes” describes the speaker’s complex relationship with her mother (lines 9–10).). Analyze how this specific word or phrase impacts the meaning of the first stanza (e.g., The phrase “forever hungry / for her eyes” (lines 9–10) develops the idea that the speaker’s mother does not give her daughter the attention that she desires. Although the mother cares for her daughter and feeds her dinner, the speaker is still “hungry” for something that her mother does not give her. The speaker’s need for her mother’s “eyes” suggests that she feels ignored by her mother and wants her attention.).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None.
Vocabulary to teach (may include direct word work and/or questions)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None.
Additional vocabulary to support English Language Learners (to provide directly)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fixed (v.) – prepared

Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
Standards & Text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards: RL.11-12.4, W.11-12.9.a Text: “From the House of Yemanjá” by Audre Lorde, stanza 1 (http://www.poetryfoundation.org/) (Masterful Reading: poem in its entirety) Learning Sequence: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of Lesson Agenda Homework Accountability Masterful Reading Reading and Discussion Quick Write Closing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5% 10% 5% 65% 10% 5%

Materials

- Copies of “From the House of Yemanjá” for each student
- Copies of the Ideas Tracking Tool for each student
- Student copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist (refer to 11.2.1 Lesson 1)

① Consider numbering the lines of “From the House of Yemanjá” before this 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.
	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.
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.11-12.4. In this lesson, students engage in an evidence-based discussion to determine the connotative and figurative meanings of words and phrases as they are used in the text and analyze how these specific word choices impact the meaning of the first stanza of Audre Lorde's poem "From the House of Yemanjá." Students demonstrate their learning at the end of the lesson by completing a Quick Write.

- ▶ 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 AIR 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 share how they applied their focus standard to their AIR text from the previous lesson's homework.

Activity 3: Masterful Reading

5%

Have students listen to a masterful reading of "From the House of Yemanjá" in its entirety.

- ▶ Students follow along, reading silently.
- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider posting or projecting the following guiding question to support students throughout this lesson:

What words and phrases does Lorde use to describe how the speaker's mother makes her feel?

Activity 4: Reading and Discussion

65%

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

Instruct student pairs to reread and annotate lines 1–4 of stanza 1 (from "My mother had two faces and a frying pot" through "into girls / before she fixed our dinner") and discuss the following questions in their pairs before participating in a whole-class discussion.

- ① This focused annotation supports students' engagement with W.11-12.9.a, which focuses on the use of textual evidence in writing.
- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the following definition: *fixed* means "prepared."

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

What words and phrases establish the point of view of the speaker?

💬 Student responses may include:

- The speaker refers to “[m]y mother” (line 1), which establishes that the speaker has the point of view of a daughter.
- The word “our” in line 4, “before she fixed our dinner” indicates that the speaker is one of the “daughters” the mother “cooked up ... into girls” (lines 2–3).
- The phrases “frying pot” (line 1), “cooked up” (line 2), and “fixed our dinner” (line 4) indicate that the speaker is in her mother’s kitchen.

How does the speaker describe her mother?

💬 The speaker describes her mother as having “two faces” (line 1) and a “frying pot” (line 1).

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students respond to this question with a description of the mother’s actions in lines 2–3, consider focusing their response with the following question:

How does the speaker describe her mother’s features?

💬 The speaker describes her mother as “ha[ving] two faces” (line 1).

What is the effect of the image of a mother with “two faces” on the tone of the poem?

💬 The image of a mother with “two faces” (line 1) creates a tone of uncertainty or confusion, because it seems like the mother is two people at once.

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle with this image, consider explaining the idiom “two-faced” to students. “Two-faced” is an adjectival phrase that means saying different comments to different people in order to get their approval instead of speaking and behaving honestly.

How does the mother use her “frying pot”?

💬 The mother uses the “frying pot” (line 1) to “cook[] up her daughters / into girls” (lines 2–3) and to “fix[] ... dinner” for her daughters (line 4).

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider asking the following optional extension question to deepen students’ understanding of lines 2–3:

What is the connotative meaning of the phrase “daughters / into girls”?

💬 The change from “daughters” into “girls” signifies their transition from members of a family or household to members of a larger society (lines 2–3). The word “daughter” is a description of the speaker’s role in her family because it situates her in relation to her mother, whereas the

word “girls” describes the speaker’s role in larger society, because it situates her in relation to the rest of the world.

- ① Consider reminding students that *connotative* means “a suggested or associated meaning in addition to a word’s primary meaning.”

How does the imagery in lines 2–3 develop the relationship between the “mother” and “her daughters”?

💬 Student responses may include:

- The image of the mother “cook[ing] up her daughters / into girls” develops the idea that she plays an important role in shaping who her daughters are (lines 2–3).
- The image of the mother “fix[ing] our dinner” reveals that she takes care of her daughters, and provides them with nourishment (line 4).

Instruct student pairs to reread lines 5–10 of stanza 1 (from “My mother had two faces / and a broken pot” through “moon and forever hungry / for her eyes”) and discuss the following questions in their pairs before participating in a whole-class discussion.

How does Lorde refine the image of the “pot” in lines 6–7?

💬 Student responses may include:

- In lines 1–4, Lorde constructs the image of the mother’s pot as a familiar and functional household object, a “frying pot” that she uses to cook “dinner.” In lines 6–7, the image of the mother’s pot is repeated or refined as a “broken pot,” something that does not work or is damaged, which the mother uses to “hid[e] out a perfect daughter,” rather than to cook.
- In lines 1–3, Lorde crafts the image of a pot as a tool that the mother uses in her kitchen to transform or change both of her daughters, she uses her pot to cook “up her daughters / into girls.” In lines 6–8 Lorde refines the image of a pot by describing it as an object that the mother uses to hide or conceal only one of her daughters, a “perfect daughter” who is not the speaker.

How does this imagery further develop the relationship between the “mother” and “her daughters”?

- 💬 The refinement of the image of the “pot” from a “frying pot” into a “broken pot” develops the idea that the mother is creating a distinction between her daughters. Even though the mother is making her “daughters / into girls” (lines 2–3), she is only protecting the “perfect daughter,” who is not the speaker (lines 7–8).

How do lines 7–8 relate to lines 9–10? What is the impact of this structural choice?

Student responses may include:

- In line 8, the speaker says what she is not: the “perfect daughter” (line 7). In line 9, she explains what she is: she says, “I am the sun and moon.” The order of the lines emphasizes that the speaker considers herself to be inferior or imperfect, because she is both “the sun and moon” (line 9).
- In lines 7–8, the speaker makes it clear that by “hid[ing] out” the “perfect daughter” in the pot, her mother favors a daughter who is not the speaker. Because the mother does not give the same attention to the speaker as she does to her other daughter, the speaker feels that she is “forever hungry / for her eyes” (lines 9–10). The order of the lines emphasizes that the speaker’s feeling of imperfection leads to a desire for her mother’s attention.

What is the impact of the imagery that the speaker uses to describe herself in line 9?

Student responses may include:

- The speaker describes herself as the “sun and moon” (line 9). This imagery develops the idea of a division or contrast in the speaker’s sense of self, because the sun occurs during the day and the moon occurs at night. Therefore, the speaker says that she is two entities that occur at different times, or two opposite entities, at the same time.
- In the beginning of stanza 1, the speaker describes herself in relation to family and home. In line 9, the speaker describes herself through images of “the sun and moon” that are in relation to the universe and the world. The shift in imagery in line 9 emphasizes the power the speaker sees in herself – she is not just a “daughter,” but two major universal forces.
- In line 9, the author describes herself as both the “sun and moon” and “forever hungry.” This imagery emphasizes that even though the speaker compares herself to the power and greatness of two celestial bodies, she simultaneously feels that she is lacking something that she desires. The speaker is simultaneously universal and powerful, and incomplete and in need, or “forever hungry.”

How are the words “hungry” and “eyes” used in the phrase “forever hungry / for her eyes”? How does this phrase further develop the relationship between the speaker and her mother?

Student responses should include:

- The word “hungry” (line 9) is used figuratively to represent the speaker’s desire or need for her mother’s “eyes” (line 10).
- “Eyes” in this context represent the mother’s attention or recognition.
- This phrase develops the idea that the speaker is constantly (“forever”) seeking recognition from her mother, which she never receives.

How does this imagery further develop an idea introduced earlier in the poem?

Student responses may include:

- The imagery of the speaker as both “the sun and the moon” (line 9) develops the idea that the speaker is two people at once, or has a double identity. A similar idea was introduced in line 1 through the image of the mother with “two faces” (line 1). The speaker appears to see the same duality, or two identities, in herself as she does in her mother. Perhaps the speaker has inherited her dual identity from her mother.
- The imagery of the speaker as “forever hungry / for her eyes” (lines 9–10) develops the speaker’s relationship with her mother established in lines 1–4. Although the mother raises her daughters by “cook[ing]” them into girls, and cares for them and nourishes them by cooking their dinner, the speaker is still hungry or feels a lack of connection with her mother.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students require additional support determining an idea introduced in this poem, consider rephrasing the question:

How does this imagery further develop an idea introduced in line 1?

Activity 5: Quick Write

10%

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

Determine the meaning of a word or phrase as it is used in stanza 1, and analyze how this specific word choice impacts the meaning of the first stanza.

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

5%

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to reread the first stanza of “From the House of Yemanjá” (from “My mother had two faces and a frying pot” through

“moon and forever hungry / for her eyes”) and record at least one idea introduced and developed in stanza 1 on their Ideas Tracking Tools.

Also for homework, students should continue to read their AIR text through the lens of a focus standard of their choice and prepare for a 3–5 minute discussion of their text based on that standard.

- ▶ Students follow along.

Homework

For homework, reread the first stanza of “From the House of Yemanjá” and record at least one idea introduced and developed in stanza 1 on your Ideas Tracking Tool.

Also, continue reading your AIR text through the lens of a focus standard of your choice and prepare for a 3–5 minute discussion of your text based on that standard.

Ideas Tracking Tool

Name:		Class:		Date:	
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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 text. Cite textual evidence to support your work.

Text:	
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Stanza #	Ideas	Notes and Connections