

11.2.2

Lesson 10

Introduction

In this lesson, students read and analyze the second stanza of Audre Lorde’s poem “From the House of Yemanjá” (from “I bear two women upon my back” through “huge exciting anchors / in the midnight storm”). In this stanza, the speaker describes the “two women” that she carries on her “back” (line 11). Students interpret the meaning of the figurative language in this stanza, and analyze the role it plays in the text.

Students demonstrate their learning at the end of this lesson in a Quick Write response to the following prompt: Identify an example of figurative language in the second stanza. Interpret the meaning of this language in context and analyze the role it plays in the text. For homework, students conduct a brief search into Yemanjá, mentioned in the title of the poem, and record at least one new idea introduced and developed in stanza 2 on their Ideas Tracking Tools.

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.a	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. 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”).
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. 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.

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"> Identify an example of figurative language in the second stanza. Interpret the meaning of this language in context and analyze the role it plays in the text.
High Performance Response(s)
<p>A High Performance Response should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interpret the meaning of figurative language in context (e.g., Lorde identifies the “two women” the speaker carries upon her back as her “mother[s],” (lines 11–14) and uses contrasting figurative language like “dark” and “ivory,” and “rich” and “hungers” to illustrate that the two mothers are the opposite of each other (lines 12–14). The image of the “dark” mother “hidden” within the “pale” mother indicates that the speaker understands the two women on her back as two women in one body (lines 11–15). The phrase “I bear two women upon my back” is a metaphor that represents the speaker carrying or supporting the weight of her mother’s dual identity (line 11).). Analyze the role the figurative language plays in the text (e.g., This image further develops the complex relationship between mother and daughter introduced in stanza 1 because it demonstrates how the speaker feels about her mother’s dual identity. The speaker finds her mother’s dual identity difficult to shoulder. She feels it is a burden, or a weight that she must carry (line 11).).

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"> bear (v.) – to support the weight of
Additional vocabulary to support English Language Learners (to provide directly)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ivory (adj.) – a slightly yellowish white color anchors (n.) – heavy devices that are attached to a boat or ship by a rope or chain that is thrown into the water to hold the boat or ship in place.

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.a, L.11-12.4.a Text: “From the House of Yemanjá” by Audre Lorde, stanza 2 (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

- Student copies of the Ideas Tracking Tool (refer to 11.2.2 Lesson 9)—students may need additional blank copies
- Student copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist (refer to 11.2.1 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

5%

Begin by reviewing the agenda and the assessed standard for this lesson: L.11-12.5.a. In this lesson, students interpret the meaning of figurative language in the second stanza of Audre Lorde's poem "From the House of Yemanjá," and analyze the role it plays in the text. 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 take out their responses to the previous lesson's homework assignment. (For homework, reread stanza 1 and record at least one idea introduced and developed in stanza 1 on your Ideas Tracking Tool. Additionally, continue reading your Accountable Independent Reading 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).

- ▶ Students take out their homework.

Instruct students to form pairs and share an idea introduced and developed in stanza 1, as well as the notes and connections they recorded on their Ideas Tracking Tools.

- ▶ 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 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.

Activity 3: Masterful Reading

5%

Have students listen to a masterful reading of "From the House of Yemanjá" in its entirety. Instruct students to follow along and listen for imagery.

- ▶ Students follow along, reading silently.

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

How does Lorde use figurative language to describe the two women in stanza 2?

Activity 4: Reading and Discussion

65%

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

Instruct student pairs to reread and annotate lines 11–15 of stanza 2 (from “I bear two women upon my back” through “the ivory hungers of the other / mother / pale as a witch”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

- ① This annotation practice supports students’ engagement with W.11-12.9.a, which addresses the use of textual evidence in writing
- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the following definition: *ivory* means “a slightly yellowish white color.”
- ▶ Students write the definition of *ivory* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

What word from the first line of stanza 1 repeats in the first line of stanza 2? What is the effect of this repetition?

- 💬 The word “two” from the first line of stanza 1 repeats in the first line of stanza 2. The repetition of “two” creates a connection between the mother’s “two faces” in the first line of stanza 1 and the “two women upon [the speaker’s] back” in the first line of stanza 2 (line 11).

What does the speaker “bear ... upon [her] back”? What words or phrases clarify the meaning of *bear* in this context?

- 💬 The speaker “bear[s] two women upon [her] back” (line 11). The phrase “upon my back” clarifies that *bear* in this context means to hold up or support something.
- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the multiple definitions of the word *bear*. *Bear* can mean the animal, can mean “give birth,” and in this case, means “carry the weight of.” Ensure that students are able to apply the correct meaning to unpack the figurative implications of this statement.
- ① Consider drawing students’ attention to their application of standard L.11-12.4.a through the process of defining multiple-meaning words from context.

How does Lorde’s specific word choice in line 11 demonstrate the speaker’s point of view?

- The word *bear* develops the idea that the speaker is carrying something heavy. She is speaking from underneath the weight of “two women” on her “back” that she must support.

How does Lorde describe the “two women upon [her] back?” What effect does she create through this description?

- Student responses may include:
 - Lorde describes one of the women as “dark and rich” (line 12), and the other as “pale as a witch” (line 15) with “ivory hungers” (line 13). The juxtaposition of the opposite colors “dark” and “pale” creates a contrast between the “two women upon [the speaker’s] back” (line 11).
 - Lorde describes one of the women as an “other / mother” (lines 13–14). This description suggests that the speaker feels like she has a close relationship with both of the women on her back, they are her “mother[s]” (line 14). The word “other” sets up a distinction between the two mothers on the speaker’s back.
 - The words “rich” and “hungers” have opposite connotations (lines 12–13). The word “rich” suggests that one of the mothers has a large amount of something desirable, while “hungers” suggests that the other mother does not have something that she wants. The juxtaposition of these two words develops the contrast between the “two women upon [the speaker’s] back” (line 11).
 - The description “pale as a witch” (line 15) suggests that the mother with “ivory hungers” is frightening or evil (line 13).

① Consider reminding students of their work with *juxtaposition* in 11.2.1.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle to make the connection between the image of the two women on the speaker’s back and the speaker’s mother in stanza 1, consider posing the following question:

What words or phrases reveal the speaker’s relationship to the women “upon [her] back”?

- The phrase “the other / mother” (lines 13–14) reveals that the women to whom the speaker refers are her mothers.

What part of speech is the word “hungers” in line 13? What is the impact of using “hungers” in this way?

- The preposition “in” indicates that the word “hungers” in line 13 is a noun. By using “hungers” as a noun, Lorde describes “hungers” or desires that are so strong that they are tangible, or physical, rather than an immaterial feeling.

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle to identify the part of speech, consider rephrasing lines 12–14 to read “hidden in the other mother’s hungers” to clarify that “hungers” is used as a noun.
- ① Consider drawing students’ attention to their application of standard L.11-12.4.a through the process of defining multiple-meaning words from context.

What is “hidden / in the ivory hungers of the other / mother”? How does this description refine the image of what the speaker “bears ... upon [her] back”?

- ☛ The “dark and rich” mother is “hidden / in the ivory hungers of the other / mother” (lines 12–14). Student responses may include:
- This description refines the image of the “two women” upon the speaker’s back, because the “dark” mother is hidden within the body of the “other / mother,” which suggests that the speaker is carrying two different women inside one “pale” body (lines 11–15). This image develops the idea that the speaker is carrying something with her that is precious or “rich” and “hidden.”
 - This description refines the image of the “two women” upon the speaker’s “back,” because the “dark and rich” mother is concealed within the “other / mother[’s]” desires (lines 12–14). This suggests that the “other / mother” tries to satisfy her desires by consuming the “rich[ness]” of the “dark” mother (lines 12–14). This image develops the idea that one of the women on the speaker’s back is more dominant or aggressive than the other.
- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider asking students to produce a visual of lines 11–14 in order to clarify the spatial relationship between the speaker and the “two women” she describes.

How does the imagery in lines 11–15 further develop an idea introduced in the first stanza?

- ☛ Student responses may include:
- The contrasting figurative language in lines 11–15 creates the image of “two” “mother[s]” who are opposite from each other, yet in the same body, as the “dark and rich” mother is “hidden” within the “other / mother.” This imagery further develops the idea that the mother mentioned in the first stanza has a dual identity, as suggested in the phrase “my mother had two faces” (lines 1 and 5).
 - The image of the daughter carrying the mother’s dual identity “upon [her] back” suggests that the daughter feels that her mother’s dual identity is a burden that she must “bear” (line 11).
 - The image of the daughter carrying the mother’s dual identity “upon [her] back” (line 11) suggests that the daughter has inherited her mother’s dual identity because she carries it with her always.

- In the first stanza, Lorde develops the idea of the speaker's dual identity through the description "I am the sun and moon" (line 9). The speaker describes herself as two contrasting entities, one associated with light and one associated with dark. In lines 11–15, the speaker mirrors this imagery when she describes the two mothers that she "bear[s] upon [her] back" (line 11), one "dark" (line 12) and one "pale" (line 15). This mirror imagery suggests that the speaker's sense of duality comes from her mother, or is inherited from her mother.

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle to make the connection between the speaker's dual identity and her mother's dual identity, consider posing the following question:

What might the imagery of the "dark" (line 12) and "pale" (line 15) mothers on the speaker's "back" (line 11) suggest about why the speaker feels she is the "sun and moon" (line 10)?

- 💡 The imagery of the "dark" (line 12) and "pale" (line 15) mothers that the speaker carries with her in stanza 2 mirrors the imagery that the speaker uses to describe her own dual identity in stanza 1, when the speaker describes herself as "the sun and moon" (line 9). In both cases, the imagery Lorde uses depicts mother and daughter as two contrasting entities at once, one associated with light and one associated with dark. This mirror imagery suggests that the speaker's sense of duality comes from her mother, or is inherited from her mother.

Lead a brief, whole-class discussion of student responses.

Instruct student pairs to reread and annotate lines 15–20 of stanza 2 (from "pale as a witch / yet steady and familiar" through "exciting anchors / in the midnight storm") and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the following definition: *anchors* means "heavy devices that are attached to a boat or ship by a rope or chain that is thrown into the water to hold the boat or ship in place."

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

What is the impact of the word "yet" in the speaker's description of the "mother"?

- 💡 Student responses may include:

- The word "yet" could apply to the speaker's description of the "dark and rich" (line 12) mother. This would suggest that despite being "hidden / in the ivory hungers of the other / mother" (lines 12–14), the "dark and rich" (line 12) mother is still "steady and familiar" (line 16). Therefore, although she is hidden within the "pale" (line 15) mother, the "dark" (line

12) mother is still present because she is “steady” (line 16), and still recognizable because she is “familiar” (line 16).

- The word “yet” could apply to the “other / mother / pale as a witch” (lines 13–15). This would suggest that the “other / mother” is both “a witch” who is frightening and wicked, and “steady and familiar” (line 16), or comforting, at the same time. The “other / mother” (line 13–14) develops the idea that the “mother” has two opposite or contrasting identities at once.

① Students may note the racial connotations of the descriptive language in this stanza. This is a crucial connection that students develop through further analysis of this poem in 11.2.2 Lessons 11 and 12.

What effect does Lorde create on the tone of this stanza by pairing the words “bread and terror”?

- “Bread” has positive connotations because it is comforting and nourishing, while “terror” has negative connotations. By pairing the words “bread and terror” (line 17), Lorde creates the effects of confusion, conflict, or tension because she unites two words that evoke very different feelings.

① Consider drawing students’ attention to their application of standard L.11-12.5 through the process of analyzing word relationships.

How does line 18 relate to line 17? How does this structural choice impact the meaning of this stanza?

- Student responses may include:
 - Line 18 “in my sleep” indicates that the mother “brings [the speaker] bread and terror” in her sleep or dreams, rather than in real life (lines 17–18).
 - Line 18 “in my sleep” suggests that the conflicting emotions that the speaker feels towards her mother are so intense that she feels them in both her waking and sleeping life.

To what description does the image of “her breasts are huge exciting anchors” connect?

- Student responses may include:
 - The image of the mother’s breasts as “anchors / in the midnight storm” (lines 19–20) connects to the description of the “mother” (line 14) as “steady and familiar” (line 16), because anchors hold boats or other items steady by keeping them in place. Therefore, the speaker sees her mother’s body as stabilizing and safe.
 - The description of the mother’s breasts as “anchors” (line 19) connects to the description of the mother cooking dinner for her daughters in stanza 1. Both of these images suggest a mother that is capable of nurturing and nourishing her daughters.

- The description of the mother's breasts as "anchors" (line 19) connects to the speaker's description of herself as "forever hungry" (line 9) for her mother's recognition because her mother's breasts represent the potential for a return to infancy that would provide a nourishing connection and recognition for the speaker.

How do the adjectives "huge" and "exciting" refine the image of the "anchors" in lines 19–20?

- Lorde uses the image of "anchors / in the midnight storm" to describe the body of the "mother" (lines 19–20). The words "huge" and "exciting" (line 19) refine this image because they contradict or complicate the description of a "steady" and "familiar" (line 16) "anchor" (line 19). The speaker sees her mother as simultaneously comforting and unsettling.

How does Lorde's description of the body of the "mother" further develop an idea introduced in the first stanza?

- Student responses may include:
 - The metaphor Lorde crafts to describe the mother's body creates an image of two opposing forces in one person—she is both "exciting" (line 19) and a "steady and familiar" "anchor[]" (lines 16 and 19) at the same time. This image further develops the idea of a dual identity introduced in the first stanza in the description of the mother's "two faces," (lines 1 and 5) because it describes the opposing traits or characteristics that the speaker sees existing simultaneously in her mother.
 - The speaker finds her mother's body novel and exhilarating, as is evidenced in her description of her mother's breasts as "huge" and "exciting," (line 19) while she simultaneously finds comfort and familiarity in these same "breasts" that act as steady "anchors" (line 19) to keep her safe. The metaphor Lorde crafts to describe the mother's body emphasizes the contrasting feelings the mother's body evokes in the speaker, and therefore highlights her complex relationship with her mother's dual identity.

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:

Identify an example of figurative language in the second stanza. Interpret the meaning of this language in context and analyze the role it plays in the text.

Instruct students to look at their annotations to find evidence. Ask 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 conduct a brief search into Yemanjá, mentioned in the title of the poem. Students should record their research in a few sentences and be prepared to share with the class.

Additionally, instruct students to reread the second stanza of "From the House of Yemanjá" (from "I bear two women upon my back" through "huge exciting anchors / in the midnight storm" (lines 11–20)) and add to their Ideas Tracking Tools. Instruct students to identify one central idea on their tools and be prepared to share with the class.

- ▶ Students follow along.

① Consider instructing students to conduct a brief search into the life of Audre Lorde. Instruct students to choose three facts about Lorde and explain how these facts might contribute to her perspective as a writer. Encourage students to utilize media and print resources at school, home, and/or public libraries to facilitate their searches.

Homework

For homework, conduct a brief search into Yemanjá, mentioned in the title of the poem. Record your research in a few sentences and be prepared to share with the class. Additionally, reread the second stanza of "From the House of Yemanjá" (from "I bear two women upon my back" through "huge exciting anchors / in the midnight storm") and add to your Ideas Tracking Tool. Identify one central idea on your tool and be prepared to share with the class.

Model 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:	"From the House of Yemanjá" by Audre Lorde
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Stanza #	Ideas	Notes and Connections
1	The speaker feels her mother is two different people at the same time.	Lorde introduces this idea through the metaphor "my mother had two faces" (lines 1 and 5)
1	The speaker has a dual identity.	Lorde develops this ideas through the speaker's metaphorical statement "I am the sun and the moon" (line 9). These are two opposite entities, and the speaker is both of them at once. The speaker's own sense of duality connects to the duality she sees in her mother.
1	The speaker has a complex relationship with her mother.	Lorde develops this idea through the speaker's statement "I am the sun and moon and forever hungry / for her eyes" (lines 9-10). Although the mother provides the speaker with nourishment in her kitchen, the speaker still desires a connection with her mother, or recognition that she has not received.