

# 12.4.2 Lesson 3

## Introduction

In this lesson, students analyze pages 410-420 of “The Overcoat” from *The Collected Tales of Nikolai Gogol* (from “Precisely where the clerk who had invited him lived” to “not in a straight hand but much more obliquely and slantwise”), in which Akaky Akakievich is robbed of his overcoat, becomes ill, and dies. Students analyze the development of central ideas in this excerpt. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: How do two central ideas develop in relation to Akaky Akakievich's stolen overcoat?

For homework, students read pages 420-424 of “The Overcoat” and annotate for the interaction of two central ideas. Additionally, students respond briefly in writing to two questions about the conclusion of “The Overcoat.”

## Standards

Assessed Standard(s)	
RL.11-12.2	Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.
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

File: 12.4.2 Lesson 3 Date: 6/30/15 Classroom Use: Starting 9/2015

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**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.

- How do two central ideas develop in relation to Akaky Akakievich's stolen overcoat?

**High Performance Response(s)**

A High Performance Response should:

- Identify two central ideas (e.g., power dynamics and identity).
- Analyze how the central ideas develop in relation to Akaky Akakievich's stolen overcoat (e.g., The central ideas of power dynamics and identity further develop in relation to Akaky Akakievich's stolen overcoat by demonstrating a contrast in his life with and without the coat. With the new overcoat, Akaky Akakievich's identity shifts from being a person uninterested in the slightest "diversion" from copying (p. 399), to a person who attends a "party" with co-workers (p. 409). His co-workers' positive reactions to the new overcoat empower Akaky Akakievich to engage with the world around him as if it were "something new" (p. 410), but this engagement leads to the theft of the overcoat. Despite his best efforts to exercise his more empowered identity and "show some character" when he goes to the "superintendent" (p. 414) for help, he wields no power with the superintendent. Thus, Akaky Akievich, without his new overcoat, is left powerless and unable to rely on his evolving identity to get the result he seeks.

## Vocabulary

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**Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)**

- lackey (n.) - a person who is or acts like a weak servant of someone powerful
- hovels (n.) - small, very humble dwellings or houses
- sentry box (n.) - a small structure for sheltering a guard or police person from bad weather
- inadvertent (adj.) - unintentional
- foreboding (n.) - a strong inner feeling or notion of a future misfortune, evil, etc.
- scribes (n.) - professional or public copyists or writers
- lamentable (adj.) - regrettable, unfortunate
- intercession (n.) - a plea on behalf of another person
- curtly (adj.) - rudely brief in speech or abrupt in manner
- quinsy (n.) - an abscess in the tissue around the tonsil usually resulting from bacterial infection and often accompanied by pain and fever
- poultice (n.) - a soft mass of cloth, bread, meal, herbs, etc., applied hot as a medicament to the body
- kaput (adj.) - ruined; done for; demolished

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

- None.

**Additional vocabulary to support English Language Learners (to provide directly)**

- sparsely (adv.) - thinly covering an area; not thick or full
- populous (adj.) - having a large population
- sprightliness (n.) - the condition of being full of life and energy
- plodded (v.) - walked slowly and usually heavily
- trifling (adj.) - having little value or importance
- inopportune (adj.) - done or happening at the wrong time
- roasting (n.) - the act of severely criticizing someone
- blasphemed (v.) - spoke evil of; slandered; abused
- gave up the ghost (idiom) - died

## Lesson Agenda/Overview

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Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
<b>Standards &amp; Text:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standards: RL.11-12.2, W.11-12.9.a</li> <li>Text: “The Overcoat” from <i>The Collected Tales of Nikolai Gogol</i> by Nikolai Gogol, pages 410-420</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. Reading and Discussion</li> <li>4. Quick Write</li> <li>5. Closing</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 5%</li> <li>2. 20%</li> <li>3. 55%</li> <li>4. 15%</li> <li>5. 5%</li> </ol>

## Materials

- Student copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist (refer to 12.4.1 Lesson 1) (optional)

## 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 questions for the teacher to ask students.</b>
	<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%**

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Begin by reviewing the agenda and the assessed standard for this lesson: RL.11-12.2 In this lesson, students continue their analysis of “The Overcoat,” paying particular attention to the way in which two central ideas develop in relation to Akaky Akakievich’s stolen overcoat.

- Students look at the agenda.

## Activity 2: Homework Accountability

**20%**

Instruct students to take out their responses to the first part of the previous lesson’s homework assignment. (Read pages 410-420 of “The Overcoat” and annotate for the development of central ideas.) Instruct students to form pairs and share their annotations.

- Student annotations may include:
  - “When he told her what was the matter, she ... said he must go straight to the superintendent, that the inspector would cheat him ... and that it was best to go to the superintendent, that he was a man of her acquaintance” (p. 413) - Akaky Akakievich’s landlady advises him to bypass the typical power structure of reporting a crime because she is worried about the lower ranking officials not helping Akaky Akakievich, thus developing the central idea of power dynamics.
  - “[F]or once in his life, Akaky Akakievich decided to show some character” (p. 414) - Akaky Akakievich shows a change in character and becomes assertive, as if his identity is impacted by the theft of his overcoat, thus, developing the central idea of identity.
  - “It should be realized that this *certain important person* had become an important person only recently, and till then had been an unimportant person. However, his position even now was not considered important in comparison with other, still more important ones” (p. 415) - The emphasis on “important” indicates the significance of power based on rank in Akaky Akakievich’s society, thus developing the central idea of power dynamics.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

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Instruct students to take out their responses to the second part of the previous lesson’s homework assignment. (Respond briefly in writing to the following prompt: Consider the excerpts of “The Overcoat” you have read thus far (pp. 394-410) and discuss the emergence of a central idea.) Instruct student pairs to discuss their responses.

- Student responses may include:
  - The central idea of power dynamics emerges early in the story when the narrator refers to “officialdom” and the serious manner in which people in Akaky Akakievich’s society take their titles or “rank,” which is so important that people “announced [their rank] first of all” (p. 394). As evidence of society’s obsession with rank, the narrator relates an incident of a “police chief” who is personally offended by the negative portrayal of a generic police chief in a “novelistic work” (p. 394). The narrator’s descriptions of Akaky Akakievich’s interaction with his co-workers again reinforces power dynamics by demonstrating how Akaky Akakievich appears to be powerless against their “pok[ing] fun” and “jokes” (p. 396).
  - The central idea of identity emerges with the narrator’s explanation of the appearance of the “*certain clerk*” (p. 394), his naming, work habits, and interactions with co-workers. The “*certain clerk*,” Akaky Akakievich, is regarded by others as a “mere fly” and is “shown no respect at all” (p. 396), thus indicating his identity is passive and defined by his lack of engagement with the world around him. Only after Akaky Akakievich buys a new overcoat and is invited to “a party” (p. 409) with his colleagues is he empowered to explore an identity in which he interacts with others.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

### Activity 3: Reading and Discussion

55%

Instruct students to remain in pairs from the previous activity. 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 (W.11-12.9.a).

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

**How do the events before and after the theft of Akaky Akakievich’s overcoat relate to two central ideas?**

Instruct student pairs to refer to pages 410-420 (from “Precisely where the clerk who had invited him lived” to “not in a straight hand but much more obliquely and slantwise”), and discuss the following questions before sharing out with the class.

Provide students with the definitions of *lackey*, *hovels*, *sentry box*, *inadvertent*, *foreboding*, *scriveners*, *lamentable*, *intercession*, *curtly*, *quinsy*, *poultice*, and *kaput*.

- Students may be familiar with some of these words. Consider asking students to volunteer definitions before providing them to the group.
  - Students write the definitions of *lackey*, *hovels*, *sentry box*, *inadvertent*, *foreboding*, *scriveners*, *lamentable*, *intercession*, *curtly*, *quinsy*, *poultice*, and *kaput* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the definitions of *sparsely*, *populous*, *sprightliness*, *plodded*, *trifling*, *inoportune*, *roasting*, *blasphemed*, and *gave up the ghost*.
  - Students write the definitions of *sparsely*, *populous*, *sprightliness*, *plodded*, *trifling*, *inoportune*, *roasting*, *blasphemed*, and *gave up the ghost* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

**What does Akaky Akakievich’s behavior on the way to the party suggest about his developing character?**

- With his new overcoat, Akaky Akakievich engages with the world around him and finds pleasure in it. On the way to the party, Akaky Akakievich notices the people and activity on the streets and looks at “it all as at something new” (p. 410). Whereas before, he had “[n]ot once in his life ... ever pa[id] attention to what was going on or happening every day in the street” (p. 398), on the night of the party, Akaky Akakievich stops “curiously before a lighted shop window” (p. 410) to contemplate a picture and is amused by it. This display of emotion demonstrates a new, emerging side of Akaky Akakievich’s identity that accompanies his new overcoat.

**How does the new overcoat impact Akaky Akakievich’s relationship with his co-workers?**

- Akaky Akakievich’s co-workers relate to him based on the coat he wears. Before the new overcoat, Akaky Akakievich appears powerless, is “poked fun” at, and is the subject of “jokes” (p. 396). With the new overcoat, Akaky Akakievich’s co-workers acknowledge him positively with “congratulat[ions]” and “cheer[s]” (p. 409), invite him to a party, and “greet[]” Akaky Akakievich with “cries” (p. 411) when they see him at the party. As Akaky Akakievich becomes part of the group; he gains the power to participate as a member, “drink[ing] two glasses” of “champagne” (p. 412) and eating supper with them.

**How does Akaky Akakievich’s experience at the party and immediately afterward further develop two central ideas in the text?**

- Akaky Akakievich’s experience at the party and immediately after it further develops the central ideas of power dynamics and identity. Though Akaky Akakievich does not feel comfortable, and is even “bored” by the party (p. 411), he is accepted by his co-



workers for the first time. Akaky Akakievich “rejoic[es]” to see how his co-workers “praise[]” the overcoat (p. 411), which further empowers him to interact with the world differently. This shift in Akaky Akakievich’s identity and power is evident immediately after he leaves the party when he “suddenly” runs “after some lady” and then “marvel[s]” at his “sprightliness of unknown origin” (p. 412).

**What do the reactions of the “on-duty policeman” (p. 413) and “the superintendent” (p. 414) to the theft of Akaky Akakievich’s new overcoat demonstrate about their use of authority?**

- Both the “on-duty policeman” (p. 413) and “the superintendent” (p. 414) seem completely uninterested in the theft of Akaky Akakievich’s new overcoat, and are unwilling to use their authority to help him in any way. The policeman, who admits seeing Akaky Akakievich with the robbers, denies seeing the attackers “put a fist ... right to [Akaky Akakievich’s] mouth,” “kick” him, and cause him to fall “face down in the snow” (p. 413). The police officer does nothing for Akaky Akakievich, saying he thought the attackers were Akaky Akakievich’s “friends” (p. 413). The superintendent diverts his attention away from the crime Akaky Akakievich comes to report, to accusations of Akaky Akakievich’s own behavior. Both authority figures see Akaky Akakievich as a person without influence and power and thus treat Akaky Akakievich’s needs as unimportant.

**What does Akaky Akakievich’s decision to “show some character” (p. 414) suggest about his evolving identity?**

- Akaky Akakievich’s decision to “show some character” for “once in his life” (p. 414) demonstrates Akaky Akakievich is no longer a person who simply “live[s] ... in his work” (p. 397) without any “diversion” (p. 399). Instead, he asserts his needs and uses the power of his connection to “his department” (p. 414) to gain an audience with the superintendent.

**Why is the “important person” (p. 415) not specifically named in the text?**

- The “important person” is not specifically named because his rank defines his identity and, thus, he does not need a name. Stating further that the “precise[] post” of the “important person” “remains unknown” (p. 415), the narrator reinforces an emphasis on power and implies that details about this person’s identity, such as his real name and post, are unimportant; he is important only because of his “position” (p. 415).

**What does the description of the “important person” on page 415-416 suggest about Petersburg society?**

- Student responses may include:

- The description indicates that “importance” (p. 416) in Petersburg is fluid or changing. The “*important person*” was able to “increase his importance” by introducing customs that were “imposing and majestic” (p. 415). Practices instituted by this person, such as “lower clerks meeting him on the stairs when he came to the office” and not allowing others “to come to him directly” (p. 415), make his importance more noticeable by forcing others to continually acknowledge and submit to his authority.
  - The narrator’s statement, “everything in holy Russia is infected with imitation” is a comment on how people in Petersburg revere and “mimic[]” that which is deemed “important” by complicating life with unnecessary “custom[s]” and “habits” (p. 415). This idea of “imitation” suggests that people copy each other’s powerful “habits” (p. 415) so that they, too, can become powerful.
  - The “*important person*” is a “kind man at heart,” but at “receiving the rank of general, he ... did not know how to behave” as a person of power in Petersburg (p. 416). He adopted a system of “[s]trictness, strictness, and—strictness” (p. 415). This behavior suggests that people in Petersburg society may mistreat others by instilling “fear” (p. 416) in order to maintain and demonstrate power.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle, consider posing the following scaffolding question:

**How does the repetition of the word *important* on pages 415-416 further refine a central idea in the text?**

- The repetition of the word *important* on pages 415-416 develops the central idea of power dynamics in the text. As in the beginning of the story, where the narrator discusses “all this officialdom” and that “rank must be announced first of all” (p. 394), this repetition emphasizes the obsession of “holy Russia” (p. 415) with rank and power, and the fact that those who are suddenly deemed important wield power by default.

**Why was the “moment ... very opportune for the important person,” but “very inopportune” for Akaky Akakievich (p. 416)?**

- The “moment” was “very opportune for the important person” because it gave him the opportunity to wield his power with his “old acquaintance” as an audience (p. 416). For the same reason, the “moment” was “very inopportune”(p. 416) for Akaky Akakievich. Had the “important person” not had an audience to impress, he may have shown Akaky Akakievich the version of himself that was “kind” and “decent” (p. 416).

**How does the interaction between Akaky Akakievich and the *important person* in this excerpt contribute to the development of a central idea?**

- Student responses may include:
  - The interaction between Akaky Akakievich and the *important person* in this excerpt contributes to the central idea of identity because the interaction demonstrates Akaky Akakievich's newfound assertiveness and willingness to engage people despite his "humble look," "old uniform," and "timidity" (p. 417). The power of the *important person* overwhelms and "fluster[s]" (p. 417) Akaky Akakievich, however, and prevents him from fully exercising his more empowered identity.
  - The interaction between Akaky Akakievich and the *important person* contributes to the central idea of power dynamics because the *important person's* treatment of Akaky Akakievich is a direct expression of his need to appear powerful by disempowering Akaky Akakievich. The *important person* does not appear to care at all about Akaky Akakievich's overcoat; he only wants to show his dominance and adherence to "the order" (p. 417). The "important person [is] pleased" that his exercise of power over Akaky Akakievich makes Akaky Akakievich so fearful that he is "unable to stand" (p. 418). The interaction between the two men demonstrates that the exercise of power in Petersburg is more important than humane treatment of individuals.

**What do the narrator's statements about Akaky Akakievich being "dear to no one" (p. 419) and about the "bright visitor in the form of an overcoat" (p. 420) suggest about identity in Petersburg?**

- The narrator's statements suggest the arbitrary nature or silliness of identity in Petersburg, by showing how an object as simple as an overcoat affects others' perception, and therefore the way a person perceives him/herself. Akaky Akakievich is not recognized as worthy of interaction, nor does he attempt interaction until he has the new overcoat. With the new coat, Akaky Akakievich is empowered to engage the world around him, but as soon as he loses the overcoat he is once again "interesting to no one" (p. 419).

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

## Activity 4: Quick Write

15%

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

**How do two central ideas develop in relation to Akaky Akakievich's stolen overcoat?**

Instruct students to look at their annotations to find evidence. Ask students to use this lesson’s vocabulary wherever possible in their written responses.

- Students listen and read the Quick Write prompt.
- 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.
- Consider using the Short Response Rubric to assess students’ writing. Students may use the Short Response Rubric and Checklist to guide their written responses.

## Activity 5: Closing

5%

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to read pages 420-424 of “The Overcoat” (from “But who could imagine that this was not yet all” to “vanished completely into the darkness of the night”) and annotate for the interaction of two central ideas (W.11-12.9.a). Additionally, instruct students to respond briefly in writing to the following questions about the conclusion of “The Overcoat”:

What makes the “ending” of the story “fantastic” (p. 420)?

Who is the “dead man” rumored to be “pulling” (p. 420) overcoats from people? Explain your response.

- Students follow along.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider explaining to students that the use of the word *fantastic* in this context can be defined as “highly unrealistic or impractical; outlandish.” Remind students of their work with this word in a different context in 12.4.1 Lesson 7 when Blanche dismisses Stanley’s accusations as “fantastic” (p. 143) in *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

## Homework

Read pages 420-424 of “The Overcoat” (from “But who could imagine that this was not yet all” to “vanished completely into the darkness of the night”) and annotate for the interaction

of two central ideas. Additionally, respond briefly in writing to the following questions about the conclusion of “The Overcoat”:

**What makes the “ending” of the story “fantastic” (p. 420)?**

**Who is the “dead man” rumored to be “pulling” (p. 420) overcoats from people? Explain your response.**