

12 LC

Lesson 12

Introduction

In this lesson, students continue analyzing *Song of Solomon*, pages 173-186 (from “Every night now Guitar was seeing little scraps” to “she had a splinter of wood and put it in her mouth”). In this excerpt, Milkman tells Guitar about the gold he believes Pilate is keeping in her house, and they take the gold. Students analyze Morrison’s use of figurative language to develop central ideas. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: How does Morrison’s use of figurative language contribute to the development of a central idea in this excerpt?

For homework, students read pages 187-209 of *Song of Solomon* and annotate for character development. Also, students develop 2-3 discussion questions focused on character development and prepare possible answers to their questions for discussion. Additionally, students record any other questions that emerge during their reading, and write answers to any earlier questions that they have resolved.

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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. |
| 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) | |
| RL.11-12.3 | Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed). |
| 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, b | 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. b. Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., <i>conceive</i> , <i>conception</i> , <i>conceivable</i>). |

Assessment

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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 does Morrison’s use of figurative language contribute to the development of a central idea in this excerpt?

High Performance Response(s)

A High Performance Response should:

- Analyze how Morrison uses figurative language to develop a central idea in the excerpt (e.g., Morrison develops the central idea of freedom by using the symbol of the peacock to show how freedom is made difficult or impossible by material possessions. By describing the peacock’s tail as “jewelry” and “vanity” (p. 179), Guitar suggests that money and goods will only weigh someone down and not allow them to be free. He explains, “can’t nobody fly with” (p. 179) all their possessions (“jewelry”) and attitudes “like vanity” weighing them down. Guitar continues, “Wanna’ fly, you got to give up the [stuff] that weighs you down” (p. 179). Thus, Guitar shows Milkman why Macon and Milkman’s belief that “money is freedom” (p. 163) is not true.).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)

- dominion (n.) - a territory, usually of considerable size, in which a single ruler holds sway
- gravitated (v.) - had a natural tendency or was strongly attracted (usually followed by *to* or *toward*)
- gesticulating (v.) - making or using gestures, especially in an animated or excited manner with or instead of speech
- asceticism (n.) - the practice of strict self-denial as a measure of personal and especially spiritual discipline
- whimsical (adj.) - unusual in a playful or amusing way; not serious
- acridness (n.) - extreme sharpness or bitterness
- clarion (adj.) - clear and shrill
- tentativeness (n.) - the state of being unsure or uncertain; hesitant
- inauthenticity (n.) - the state of not being real, accurate, or sincere

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

- septic (adj.) - infected with bacteria
- indecisiveness (n.) - the state of being unable to make choices quickly and confidently

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

- escapade (n.) - an exciting, foolish, or dangerous experience or adventure
- bantering (v.) - making jokes about each other in a friendly way
- rigors (n.) - the difficult and unpleasant conditions or experiences that are associated with something

Lesson Agenda/Overview

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| Student-Facing Agenda | % of Lesson |
|---|--|
| Standards & Text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards: RL.11-12.2, RL.11-12.4, RL.11-12.3, W.11-12.9.a, L.11-12.4.a, b Text: <i>Song of Solomon</i> by Toni Morrison, pages 173-186 | |
| Learning Sequence: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda 2. Homework Accountability 3. Reading and Discussion 4. Quick Write 5. Closing | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 5% 2. 15% 3. 60% 4. 15% 5. 5% |

Materials

- Student copies of the Central Ideas and Motifs Tracking Tool (refer to 12 LC Lesson 3) (optional)—students may need additional blank copies
- Student copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist (refer 12 to LC Lesson 1) (optional)

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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 standards for this lesson: RL.11-12.2 and RL.11-12.4. In this lesson, students analyze pages 173-186 of *Song of Solomon*, focusing on how Morrison uses figurative language to develop central ideas.

- Students look at the agenda.

Activity 2: Homework Accountability

15%

Instruct students to take out their responses to the previous lesson's homework assignment. (Read pages 173-186 of *Song of Solomon* and annotate for development of central ideas and the use of figurative language. Also, develop 2-3 discussion questions focused on character development and prepare possible answers to your questions for discussion.)

Instruct students to form pairs and talk about the discussion questions they developed for homework, specifically focusing on how characters are developed in the excerpt (RL.11-12.3).

- Student questions may include:

Why is Guitar excited by the prospect of Milkman's plan on page 174?

- Guitar's next assignment for the Seven Days is to kill "four little white girls some Sunday," since four African-American girls were "blown out of a church" (p. 173). He will need "explosives, or guns, or hand grenades" (p. 173) in order to accomplish this task, which he knows will cost more money than he has. Therefore, when Milkman tells him about his plan, he is excited because getting Pilate's gold will allow him buy the supplies to accomplish his Seven Days task.

What are Milkman's reasons on pages 175-176 for involving Guitar in the plot to steal Pilate's gold?

- Milkman hopes that the plan to steal Pilate's gold will return Guitar to his former self and their relationship to the same easy friendship they used to have. After Milkman tells Guitar about the gold, Milkman says that he has not seen Guitar "this relaxed and cordial in a long time" (pp. 175-176). Milkman wants to continue to see "Guitar warm and joking again, his face open and smiling instead of with that grim reaper look" (p. 176).

How does the description of "fear" on page 177 contribute to the development of Milkman's character?

- The description of fear shows how Milkman feels life to be more intense when lived with risk, but he relies on others to bring this feeling into his life. Previously, Milkman and Guitar enjoyed inspiring fear in others: "Dominion won by fear and secured by fear was still sweeter than any that could be got another way." Later Milkman thinks about how Guitar, by participating in the Seven Days, has put himself in "proximity to knife-cold terror." Milkman, however, knows he is passive and needs to be in the presence of someone who "inspired fear" and were themselves fearless, including Guitar, Pilate, his father, and Hagar. Milkman is "envious of their fearlessness" and brings Guitar into the scheme for "both fun and fear," emphasizing again Milkman's passivity and reliance on others' bravery.
- If student discussion is rich, text-dependent, and building toward the assessment prompt, consider extending the discussions beyond the allotted time. Then lead a brief whole-class discussion using any additional Reading and Discussion questions necessary to ensure students are prepared for the assessment. (Key questions in the Reading and Discussion activity are marked with an asterisk*.)

Activity 3: Reading and Discussion

60%

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Instruct students to form small groups. Post or project each set of questions below for students to discuss in their groups. Instruct students to continue to annotate the text as they discuss (W.11-12.9.a).

- **Differentiation Consideration:** Students may use their Central Ideas and Motifs Tracking Tools to record the development of central ideas and motifs that they identify and discuss.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider posting or projecting the following guiding question to support students throughout this lesson:

How do the descriptions of flight in this excerpt develop a central idea?

Instruct students to refer to pages 177-181 (from “Maybe he could ask him one day” to “his mind was on the wonders of TNT”) for evidence to support their responses as they discuss the following questions in groups before sharing out with the class.

Provide students with the definitions of *dominion*, *gravitated*, *gesticulating*, *asceticism*, *whimsical*, and *acridness*.

- 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 *dominion*, *gravitated*, *gesticulating*, *asceticism*, *whimsical*, and *acridness* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the definitions of *escapade*, *bantering*, and *rigors*.
 - Students write the definitions of *escapade*, *bantering*, and *rigors* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

What does Milkman’s initial reaction to the peacock suggest about his character?

- Student responses may include:
 - Milkman’s reaction to the peacock further explains his mystical experiences and emphasizes his passivity. Milkman is prepared to “accept the presence of the bird as one of those waking dreams he was subject to whenever indecisiveness was confronted with reality” (p. 178). This sentence recalls the fact that Milkman has “waking dreams” because he is passive and unable to make a choice in difficult circumstances.
 - When Guitar also acknowledges the bird, Milkman is relieved and excited to see the peacock “flying down” (p. 178). When Guitar confirms that the peacock is real,

Milkman feels “again his unrestrained joy at anything that could fly” (p. 178), recalling that flying has always been his dream since he was little.

- **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle, consider posing the following scaffolding question:

What word parts in the word *indecisiveness* (p. 178) help to clarify the meaning of the word? (L.11-12.4.b)

- The word contains *decisive*, which means “being able to make a decision.” The word also has the prefix *in* which means “not.” Therefore, the word *indecisiveness* is “the state of being unable to make a decision.”

***How does Milkman and Guitar’s conversation about the peacock develop a central idea?**

- Milkman and Guitar’s conversation about the peacock develops the central idea of freedom by describing how material possessions and “vanity” can prevent someone from achieving freedom. Milkman asks Guitar why the peacock “can’t fly no better than a chicken?” (p. 179), and Guitar explains that the tail of the peacock is too large: “All that jewelry ... like vanity. Can’t nobody fly with all” of those jewels weighing it down (p. 179). The peacock functions as a symbol of a person who is too weighed down with possessions and vanity to be free.

How do Milkman’s plans for “what the gold could buy” (p. 179) further develop his character?

- Milkman’s thoughts about what he could buy with the gold demonstrate that he thinks mainly of escaping his family and his past. With the gold, Milkman desires “boats, cars, airplanes” (p. 179), vehicles that will help him find “[n]ew people. New places” (p. 180). The repetition of “new” emphasizes how Milkman wants to leave his past and family behind. Furthermore he wants to “beat a path away from his parents’ past, which was also their present” (p. 180). Thus, Milkman wants to escape his past, because he sees how his parents were never able to “transcend” (p. 180) their own history.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle, consider posing the following scaffolding question:

How does Milkman’s description of his childhood help to clarify the meaning of the word *septic* on page 180? (L.11-12.4.a)

- Milkman explains that he believed his childhood was “sterile” (p. 180), or uninteresting and free of germs, but that his parents “wrapped his memory of it in septic sheets.” Therefore, the word *septic* must be the opposite of “sterile.” Also

the phrases after “septic sheets” further support this definition: “heavy with the odor of illness, misery, and unforgiving hearts” (p. 180). The word *septic* must mean “infected” or “diseased.”

To what extent does Guitar’s real reason for wanting the gold change over the course of the excerpt?

- Guitar’s real reason for wanting the gold does not change. Although Guitar “allow[s] himself the pleasure of waking up old dreams” (p. 179) and describing all the possessions he would buy for himself and his family, “his mind was on the wonders of TNT” (p. 181). In other words, throughout this excerpt, Guitar’s reasons for wanting the gold do not change: he thinks only about buying explosives for his Seven Days mission.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Instruct students to refer to pages 183-186 (from “‘Then let’s make an earthquake’ ‘How?’ ‘Set the house on fire’” to “she had a splinter of wood and put it in her mouth”) for evidence to support their responses as they discuss the following questions in groups before sharing out with the class.

Provide students with the definitions of *clarion*, *tentativeness*, and *inauthenticity*.

- 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 *clarion*, *tentativeness*, and *inauthenticity* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

How does Morrison use figurative language to describe Milkman’s reaction to the statement: “You got a life? Live it!” (p. 183)? How does Milkman’s reaction contribute to the development of his character?

- Student responses should include:
 - Morrison describes Milkman’s mouth filling “with salt,” the kind of “salt that lay in the bottom of the sea” as well as in a “horse’s neck” (p. 183). The salt is described as “[a] taste so powerful and necessary that stallions galloped miles and days for it” (p. 183). With these images, Morrison describes a powerful desire that horses run for days to attain. Morrison also personifies Milkman’s fear leaving like a snake: “all the tentativeness, doubt, and inauthenticity ... slither[] away without a trace” (p. 183).

- Milkman's decision to do something, to overcome his indecisiveness, is a crucial moment in the development of his character. Guitar helps Milkman to see that stealing the gold is "an act, an important, real, and daring thing to do" (p. 184), which helps Milkman to become more proactive in his life.

***How does the prospect of Milkman's joining "the chorus at Railroad Tommy's" (p. 184) develop a central idea?**

- The prospect of joining "the chorus at Railroad Tommy's" would mean a development in Milkman's identity as a member of the Southside community. Once he has a story to tell, he will be a member of the community and he will have "a clean-lined definite self" (p. 184). Joining the chorus signifies that Milkman's identity will be more "definite" and will include being an active participant in the Southside community.
- Milkman will finally be able to "tell" a story about an action he did, and in this way fit in with the others from the community. This moment develops the idea of community by showing how important storytelling is to the members of the community.

How does Morrison's description of the "ginger" smell (p. 184) affect the community, Milkman, and Guitar?

- Morrison describes the ginger smell as "sweet" and "sharp enough to distort dreams and make the sleeper believe the things he hungered for were right at hand" (p. 185). Thus the ginger smell is a symbol of people's desires or ambitions. Guitar and Milkman also smell the ginger and interpret it in their own way: as either "freedom ... or justice, or luxury, or vengeance" (p. 185), which emphasizes what each man desires.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle, consider explaining that Accra is the capital of Ghana, a country in Africa. The "East" in this excerpt refers to Africa or Asia, as opposed to the West, which usually refers to Europe and America.

***How does Morrison's description of the "sack" (p. 185) further develop a central idea?**

- Morrison describes the "sack" as the "green of Easter eggs left too long in the dye" and makes the connection to Easter itself, which "promised everything: the Risen Son and the heart's lone desire" (p. 185). This description and metaphor show how the bag of gold has come to be as important for Milkman and Guitar as the resurrection of Christ is in Christianity. The "sack" represents "[c]omplete power, total freedom, and perfect justice" (p. 185), demonstrating how both Guitar and Milkman have placed all their hopes for freedom on stealing the sack.

How does the ending of the excerpt create suspense?

- Student responses may include:
 - Milkman thinks he sees a ghost, which could be either of the man who was killed for the gold or perhaps his grandfather: as “the moonlight was playing tricks on him, for he thought he saw the figure of a man standing right behind his friend” (p. 186). Because Milkman is unsure of what he sees and may have seen a ghost, the ending is tense and suspenseful.
 - When Guitar and Milkman leave with the bag, Pilate appears at the window and wonders, “What the devil they want that for?” (p. 186), which demonstrates that she has witnessed the event and creates suspense because the question implies that there may not be anything that Milkman and Guitar would find important or valuable in the bag.

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 does Morrison’s use of figurative language contribute to the development of a central idea in this excerpt?

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%**

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Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to read pages 187-209 of *Song of Solomon* (from “Amanuensis. That was the word she chose” to “he neither answered nor turned his head at Milkman’s ‘See y’ later’”) and annotate for character development (W.11-12.9.a). Also, instruct students to develop 2-3 discussion questions focused on character development (RL.11-12.3) and prepare possible answers to the questions for discussion.

Additionally, remind students to record any new questions that emerge during their reading, and to write answers to any earlier questions that they have resolved.

- Students follow along.

Homework

Read pages 187-209 of *Song of Solomon* (from “Amanuensis. That was the word she chose” to “he neither answered nor turned his head at Milkman’s ‘See y’ later’”) and annotate for character development. Also, develop 2-3 discussion questions focused on character development and prepare possible answers to the questions for discussion.

Additionally, record any new questions that emerge during your reading and write answers to any earlier questions that you have resolved.