

12 LC

Lesson 6

Introduction

In this lesson, students analyze pages 56-74 of *Song of Solomon* (from “Life improved for Milkman enormously after he began working” to “Macon turned the doorknob, and without a backward glance, left the room”), in which Milkman grows from a boy of 13 years old to a young man of 22. Milkman physically confronts his father in this passage and learns about his parents’ troubled marriage. Students analyze the passage, paying particular attention to how Morrison develops the central idea of identity. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: How does Morrison develop the central idea of identity in this passage?

For homework, students read pages 74-89 of *Song of Solomon* and annotate for the development of central ideas. Also, students develop 2-3 questions focused on Milkman’s character development and prepare responses to the questions for discussion.

File: 12 LC Lesson 6 Date: 6/30/15 Classroom Use: Starting 9/2015

© 2015 Public Consulting Group. This work is licensed under a

Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License

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)	
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	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)

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 develop the central idea of identity in this passage?

High Performance Response(s)

A High Performance Response should:

- Analyze Morrison's development of the central idea of identity in the passage (e.g., Morrison develops the central idea of identity by demonstrating the competing social and personal forces that contribute to Milkman's developing identity. For example, Railroad Tommy tells Guitar and Milkman, "[Y]ou can join the 332nd if you want to and shoot down a thousand German planes all by yourself ... but you never going to have four stars on your shirt front" (p. 60). Tommy suggests that despite the benefits of being Macon Dead's son, even Milkman will share the societal injustices experienced by Southside's African-American men. Additionally, Milkman's parents, Macon and Ruth, compete to influence Milkman's personal identity. Macon feels "delighted" to have Milkman working for him because "[h]is son belonged to him now and not to Ruth" (p. 63). Ruth, on the other hand, suggests that Milkman should "consider going to medical school" instead of working with Macon and "use Foster as a last name" (p. 69). The conflicting forces in Milkman's environment leave him with a fractured sense of self, evident in the reflection he sees in the mirror after confronting his father. His reflection "lack[s] coherence, a coming together of the features into a total self. It [is] all very tentative" (p. 69).).

Vocabulary

File: 12 LC Lesson 6 Date: 6/30/15 Classroom Use: Starting 9/2015

© 2015 Public Consulting Group. This work is licensed under a

Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License

Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)

- academe (n.) - the campus activity, life, and interests of a college or university; the academic world
- pique (n.) - feeling of irritation or resentment, as from a wound to pride or self-esteem
- audacity (n.) - boldness or daring, especially with confident or arrogant disregard for personal safety, conventional thought, or other restrictions
- buffoon (n.) - stupid or foolish person who tries to be funny
- detrimental (adj.) - causing damage or injury
- impregnable (adj.) - strong enough to resist or withstand attack; not to be taken by force, unconquerable

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

- emulate (v.) - imitate with effort to equal or surpass

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

- contrary (adj.) - exactly opposite to something else; entirely different from something else
- sparse (adj.) - present only in small amounts; less than necessary or normal
- ambled (v.) - walked slowly in a free and relaxed way
- strut (v.) - to walk in a confident and proud way
- sophisticated (adj.) - having or showing a lot of experience and knowledge about the world and about culture, art, literature, etc.

Lesson Agenda/Overview

File: 12 LC Lesson 6 Date: 6/30/15 Classroom Use: Starting 9/2015

© 2015 Public Consulting Group. This work is licensed under a

Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
Standards & Text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards: RL.11-12.2, RL.11-12.3, W.11-12.9.a, L.11-12.4.a Text: <i>Song of Solomon</i> by Toni Morrison, pages 56-74 	
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 Short Response Rubric and Checklist (refer to 12 LC 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.
	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%

File: 12 LC Lesson 6 Date: 6/30/15 Classroom Use: Starting 9/2015

© 2015 Public Consulting Group. This work is licensed under a

Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License

Begin by reviewing the agenda and the assessed standard for this lesson: RL.11-12.2. In this lesson, students analyze pages 56-74, focusing on how the excerpt develops the central idea of identity.

- 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 56-74 of *Song of Solomon* and annotate for the development of central ideas. Also, develop 2-3 discussion questions focused on the character development of Ruth and Macon and prepare possible answers to your questions for discussion.)

Instruct students to talk in pairs about questions they developed for homework, specifically analyzing the development of Ruth and Macon's characters ([RL.11-12.3](#)).

- Student questions may include:

How do Corinthians's suspicions about Ruth on pages 64-66 further develop Ruth's character?

- Corinthians's suspicions suggest that Ruth manipulates Macon. She observes that Ruth tells stories "to bring her husband to a point, not of power ... but of helplessness" (p. 64). Ruth crafts her stories carefully, to create "a situation in which Macon would either lash out at her verbally or hit her" (p. 66), which demonstrates Ruth's attempts to manipulate Macon.

What does Macon's response to Ruth's story suggest about his attitude toward Ruth?

- Macon's response to Ruth suggests that he views her as a foolish woman, a woman without an identity of her own, and as a woman who, years after her father's death, still prefers to be known as her "daddy's daughter" (p. 67). Macon is furious that Ruth "make[s] a fool of [her]self in a Catholic church, embarrass[es] everybody at the reception, and come[s] to the table to gloat about how wonderful" she is (p. 67). He tries to humiliate Ruth by saying, "Anna Djvorak don't even know your name ... You by yourself ain't nobody. You your daddy's daughter!" (p. 67), highlighting the idea that Ruth lacks an identity outside of her father's good name.

How does the meaning and tone of the phrase "daddy's daughter" change depending on the speaker?

- Student responses should include:

File: 12 LC Lesson 6 Date: 6/30/15 Classroom Use: Starting 9/2015

© 2015 Public Consulting Group. This work is licensed under a

Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License

- Ruth's statement, "That's so ... I certainly am my daddy's daughter" (p. 67), provokes Macon's attack because she uses Macon's words against him. Macon first uses the phrase to suggest that Ruth has no individual identity or worth and that others value her only because she is her "daddy's daughter" (p. 67). Ruth takes the same words and uses them to express her pride in being the daughter of the well-respected Dr. Foster.
- Ruth speaks in a "thin but steady voice" and "smile[s]" (p. 67), adding a tone of pride to her response to Macon that further angers him. His insulting tone in "You by yourself ain't nobody. You your daddy's daughter" (p. 67) contrasts with Ruth's proud tone.
- 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%

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

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

How does this excerpt further develop Milkman's identity?

Instruct students to refer to pages 56-62 (from "Life improved for Milkman enormously after he began working" to "That's one thing I can have") 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 *academe* and *pique*.

- Students may be familiar with these words. Consider asking students to volunteer definitions before providing them to the group.
 - Students write the definitions of *academe* and *pique* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the definitions of *contrary*, *sparse*, and *ambled*.

File: 12 LC Lesson 6 Date: 6/30/15 Classroom Use: Starting 9/2015

© 2015 Public Consulting Group. This work is licensed under a

Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License

- Students write the definitions of *contrary*, *sparse*, and *ambled* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

***What does Feather's refusal to allow Milkman into his pool hall suggest about Milkman's place in his community?**

- Student responses should include:
 - Feather's refusal to allow Milkman into his pool hall suggests that Milkman is not fully accepted by his community because of his father's relationship to the community. Guitar tries to get Feather to let Milkman in by saying, "Come on Feather, he's my friend," but Feather replies, "He's Macon Dead's boy, ain't he?" (p. 57). Feather's question suggests that Milkman's identity as the son of Feather's landlord is more important than his identity as Guitar's friend.
 - Feather's refusal to allow Milkman into his pool hall suggests that Milkman is viewed as a child rather than as an adult. Another man in the pool hall argues to allow Milkman in, saying, "Aw, let the boy stay, Feather ... What harm can he do? A twelve-year-old kid" (p. 57), but Feather refuses for fear of losing his license, demonstrating that Milkman is perceived in his community as too young to be fully accepted.

How does Railroad Tommy's lecture to the boys depict the lives of African-American men in Milkman's community?

- Student responses should include:
 - Railroad Tommy's lecture highlights how racism limits the dreams of the African-American men in Milkman's community. He asks Guitar and Milkman, "You ever have five thousand dollars of cold cash money in your pocket and walk into a bank and tell the bank man you want such and such a house on such and such street and he sell it to you right then? Well, you won't ever have it" (p. 60). Thus, because of racism, even if African-American men have wealth, they will not receive the respect that white men receive.
 - Railroad Tommy's lecture suggests that because of racism, even if African Americans make the same contributions to their country that white men do, they will not receive the same recognition. To prove his point, Tommy refers to the African-American men who fought in World War II, saying, "you can join the 332nd if you want to and shoot down a thousand German planes all by yourself and land in Hitler's backyard and whip him with you own hands, but you never going to have four stars on your shirt front, or even three" (p. 60). In other words, African-

File: 12 LC Lesson 6 Date: 6/30/15 Classroom Use: Starting 9/2015

© 2015 Public Consulting Group. This work is licensed under a

Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License

American men can fight for their country heroically, but they will not earn the same rank or respect that white men will.

- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider posing the following extension question to deepen students' understanding:

To what extent does the life Tommy describes match the circumstances of Milkman and his family?

- Student responses may include:
 - Tommy's descriptions match the experiences of Macon's father, who worked hard for "sixteen years to get that farm to where it was paying," only to have it taken from him by dishonest and violent white men who "tricked him" because he couldn't read and who "told him they owned his property" (p. 53), and shot him when he wouldn't give it up.
 - Tommy's descriptions match the experiences of Ruth's father, Dr. Foster, who built a successful medical practice and lived in a beautiful home but had still "never been granted hospital privileges" at Mercy Hospital (p. 5).
 - Tommy's descriptions match the experiences of Macon, who has established a profitable real-estate business that allows him to drive his family in a "wide green Packard" (p. 32), but whose success depends on his being able to sell and rent to African Americans. When he drives to Honoré to consider buying property there, he explains to Lena that he is looking at property that "could be a nice summer place for colored people" (p. 33). In other words, his success is limited by his race.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Instruct students to refer to pages 62-74 (from "By the time Milkman was fourteen he had noticed" to "Macon turned the doorknob, and without a backward glance, left the room) for evidence to support their responses as they discuss the following questions in groups before sharing out with the class.

- This passage includes sexual content that is important in understanding text. Consider modeling and establishing norms and expectations for a respectful and critical approach to mature content in an academic context.

Provide students with the definitions of *audacity*, *buffoon*, *detrimental* and *impregnable*.

- 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 *audacity*, *buffoon*, *detrimental* and *impregnable* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students the definitions of *strut* and *sophisticated*.
 - Students write the definitions *strut* and *sophisticated* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

***How does Milkman’s “deformity” (p. 62) affect his perception of himself?**

- Student responses may include:
 - Having one leg shorter than the other affects Milkman’s perception of himself by making him self-conscious of his physical appearance. Milkman compensates by developing a gait that looks “like an affected walk, the strut of a very young man trying to appear more sophisticated than he was” (p. 62), which suggests that Milkman sees himself as weak, while trying to impress others.
 - Having one leg shorter than the other affects Milkman’s perception of himself by causing him to think of himself as disabled, separating him from his community and family. While other members of his community “rav[e]” about Harry Truman (p. 62) because of his work to set up the Committee on Civil Rights, Milkman “secretly prefer[s] FDR” and feels “[c]loser, in fact to [FDR] than to his own father” (p. 63) because he and FDR share the experience of living with a disability.
 - Having one leg shorter than the other affects Milkman’s perception of himself as someone who will never be able to be like Macon. Milkman believes “Macon had no imperfection ... Milkman feared his father, respected him, but knew, because of the leg, that he could never emulate him. So he differed from him as much as he dared” (p. 63). Thus, Milkman’s identity is shaped by his efforts to be as different from Macon as possible.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle, consider posing the following scaffolding question:

How does Milkman’s choice to behave differently from his father clarify the meaning of the word *emulate* (p. 63)? (L.11-12.4.a)

- Milkman thinks he cannot *emulate* his father so he decides to “differ[] from him as much as he dared,” suggesting that choosing to behave differently has the opposite meaning of the word *emulate*, so *emulate* must mean “imitate.”

File: 12 LC Lesson 6 Date: 6/30/15 Classroom Use: Starting 9/2015

© 2015 Public Consulting Group. This work is licensed under a

Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License

***What does Macon’s reaction to Milkman’s efforts to “do the work the way Macon wanted it done” (p. 63) suggest about Macon’s view of his relationship with his son?**

- Student responses may include:
 - Macon is “delighted” by Milkman’s efforts because he believes they are evidence that Milkman “belong[s] to him now and not to Ruth” (p. 63). Macon’s reaction suggests that he views his relationship with Milkman as part of a larger contest with his wife, and Milkman as an object to be controlled.
 - Macon feels “relieved” to have Milkman working for him because Macon no longer has to “walk all over town like a peddler collecting rents” and is able to assume a more “dignified” position in his business (p. 63). Macon’s reaction suggests that he sees his relationship with Milkman as that of an employer and an employee. His attitude is a contrast to his own relationship with his father, whom he valued because of the opportunity it gave him to work “right alongside” him (p. 51).

How does Milkman’s physical confrontation with his father change their relationship?

- Student responses should include:
 - After Milkman hits Macon, the balance of power in the relationship changes because Macon realizes that he is no longer in a position of absolute power and that his son is now physically as strong as he. Macon, who had believed he was “impregnable” (p. 67), recognizes that he is vulnerable to his son. Macon experiences “humiliation, anger, and a grudging feeling of pride in his son” (p. 68).
 - After Milkman hits Macon, Milkman feels that “[h]e ha[s] won something and lost something in the same instant” (p. 68). Milkman wins “[i]nfinite possibilities and enormous responsibilities” (p. 68), suggesting that his relationship to his father has changed and he is now free to consider a life beyond his family and his father’s business. In contrast, he loses his childhood awe for his father and feels “the pain and shame of seeing his father crumple before any man—even himself” (p. 68).

***What do the “silver-backed brushes” (p. 69) in Milkman’s room suggest about his mother’s role in shaping his identity?**

- The “silver-backed brushes ... engraved with [Milkman’s] initials, the abbreviated degree designation of a doctor,” are a gift from Ruth and represent her efforts to influence Milkman’s identity. Because Ruth has “as little respect for her husband’s work as Macon had for college graduates” (p. 69), she tries to convince Milkman to give up his work with Macon and instead pursue a degree in medicine, following her own father’s career. She even suggests that Milkman give up his last name of “Dead”

and change it to “Foster,” demonstrating the extent to which Ruth wants to influence Milkman’s identity.

***What does Milkman’s image in the mirror suggest about his identity after attacking his father?**

- The mirror reflects each separate part of his face, but it does not seem to create an image that is complete. Milkman notices his eyes, his “firm jaw line” and his “splendid teeth” (p. 69), but he is dissatisfied with the total effect. He notices that his image “lack[s] coherence, a coming together of the features into a total self” (p. 69), suggesting that his identity, too, lacks coherence and is fragmented by the competing forces seeking to control Milkman.

How does Macon’s storytelling develop the central idea of identity?

- Student responses may include:
 - Macon’s storytelling attempts to establish his identity as a misunderstood man who has been goaded or provoked rather than as an evil man who erupts in senseless violence. Although Macon tells Milkman, “Nothing I’m about to say is by way of apology or excuse. It’s just information” (p. 70), he adds, “I am not a bad man. I want you to know that. Or believe it ... I’m not making claims to sainthood, but you have to know it all” (p. 74). Macon’s words suggest that he is telling the story in an effort to shift Milkman’s perceptions of him.
 - Macon’s storytelling frames the story as part of a father’s efforts to teach his son about manhood and emphasizes Macon’s role as an influential figure in shaping Milkman’s identity. Macon begins his story by telling Milkman, “You have to be a whole man. And if you want to be a whole man, you have to deal with the whole truth” (p. 70). The story Macon tells, however, is disturbing and is likely to undermine Milkman’s allegiance to his mother, thus, shifting his identity from that of a child with an adoring mother to a man whose mother is an unstable woman.
 - Macon’s storytelling contrasts his identity with the identity of his wife and father-in-law. According to Macon, Dr. Foster and Ruth “made sure [Macon] remembered whose house [he] was in” (p. 71), making it clear that they did not view Macon as their equal. The Fosters dismiss Macon’s identity by showing no interest in “[w]here he’d come from, the farm [he] had,” or his work, which they refer to as “[b]uying shacks in shacktown” (p. 71). Macon’s story suggests that his wife’s family does not value his personal history or his goals.
 - Macon’s storytelling presents Macon as a man whose identity is shaped by his conflict with his wife and her father. Speaking of having Dr. Foster deliver Ruth’s

children, Macon recalls, “I knew then they’d ganged up on me forever—the both of them” (p. 71). Macon reinforces this perception when he describes Ruth’s unwillingness to persuade her father to invest in Macon’s business ideas and confides, “Then I began to wonder who she was married to—me or him” (p. 72). Macon’s battle against Ruth and her father culminates when he discovers Ruth at the bedside of her dead father, which, according to Macon, explains his attack on Ruth when “she said, ‘Yes, I am my daddy’s daughter,’ and gave [him] that little smirk” (p. 74).

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 develop the central idea of identity in this passage?

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 74-89 of *Song of Solomon* (from “Milkman sat on the edge of his bed” to “‘Somebody should have shot him.’ ‘What for? He was already Dead’”) and annotate for the development of central ideas (W.11-12.9.a). Also, instruct students to develop 2-3 questions focused on Milkman’s character development (RL.11-12.3) and prepare possible responses to the questions for discussion.

File: 12 LC Lesson 6 Date: 6/30/15 Classroom Use: Starting 9/2015

© 2015 Public Consulting Group. This work is licensed under a

Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License

- Students follow along.

Homework

Read pages 74-89 of *Song of Solomon* (from “Milkman sat on the edge of his bed” to “‘Somebody should have shot him.’ ‘What for? He was already Dead’”) and annotate for the development of central ideas. Also, develop 2-3 questions focused on Milkman’s character development and prepare possible responses to the questions for discussion.