

## 12 LC

## Lesson 17

## Introduction

In this lesson, students analyze pages 238-258 of *Song of Solomon* (from “His hat had been knocked off by the first branches” to “And maybe somebody in Virginia would know. Milkman followed in her tracks”), in which Milkman travels to Lincoln’s Heaven, meets Circe, and visits Hunter’s Cave for the first time. Students participate in a jigsaw discussion and analyze Milkman’s interaction with Circe and his journey to Hunter’s Cave. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: Analyze how Milkman’s journey in pages 238-258 develops his character.

For homework, students read pages 259-281 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.

## Standards

Assessed 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).
Addressed Standard(s)	
SL.11-12.1.a, c, d	<p>Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues</i>, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.</li> <li>c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.</li> <li>d. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.</li> </ul>
L.11-12.4.a	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> </ul>

## 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.

- Analyze how Milkman's journey in pages 238-258 develops his character.

**High Performance Response(s)**

A High Performance Response should:

- Analyze how Milkman's journey develops his character (e.g., Milkman's quest for gold tests his character, but he remains self-absorbed and unable to understand other people. When Milkman visits Circe, she recounts how long she has been at the Butler house, which Milkman completely misunderstands as "loyal[ty]" to the family (p. 247). Circe corrects this misunderstanding by telling Milkman that he has "about as much sense as a fart" (p. 247). Although Milkman faces challenges on his journey to the cave, such as falling in the creek and ruining his shoes and watch, his character is unchanged. He remains self-focused and unable to understand others, as evidenced by his conversation with Mr. Garnett. Milkman insults Mr. Garnett by offering to pay for the Coke and ride that Mr. Garnett gave out of courtesy. Mr. Garnett reacts as Circe did, with disbelief at Milkman's lack of understanding: he "shak[es] his head as he [drives] off" (p. 255). Milkman's interactions with Circe and Mr. Garnett demonstrate that he is still self-absorbed and that he needs to learn how to empathize with others in order to have successful, meaningful relationships.).

## Vocabulary

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

- coiffure (n.) - a style of arranging or combing the hair
- rebuffed (v.) - checked; repelled; refused; drove away
- untrammelled (adj.) - not hindered or restricted in thought or action

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

- mellifluent (adj.) - sweet or smoothly flowing; sweet-sounding

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

- repelled (adj.) - disgusted
- seductive (adj.) - sexually attractive
- devouring (v.) - looking at (something) with much enjoyment or enthusiasm
- dainty (adj.) - done with small and careful movements
- nonchalantly (adv.) - in a relaxed and calm way that shows that you do not care or are not worried about anything
- agile (adj.) - quick and well-coordinated in movement
- gauge (v.) - to make a judgment about (something)
- dolly (n.) - a piece of equipment that has wheels and that is used for moving heavy objects

## Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
<b>Standards &amp; Text:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standards: RL.11-12.3, SL.11-12.1.a, c, d, L.11-12.4.a</li> <li>• Text: <i>Song of Solomon</i> by Toni Morrison, pages 238-258</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. Jigsaw Discussion</li> <li>4. Quick Write</li> <li>5. Closing</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 5%</li> <li>2. 10%</li> <li>3. 65%</li> <li>4. 15%</li> <li>5. 5%</li> </ol>

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## Materials

- Student copies of the 12 LC Speaking and Listening Rubric and Checklist (refer to 12 LC Lesson 15)
- 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.
	<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%

Begin by reviewing the agenda and the assessed standard for this lesson: RL.11-12.3. In this lesson, students analyze pages 238-258 of *Song of Solomon* by discussing how Milkman's journey further develops his character.

- Students look at the agenda.

### Activity 2: Homework Accountability

10%

Instruct students to take out their responses to the previous lesson's homework assignment. (Conduct a brief search into the mythical character of Circe and write a few brief statements

about who she is and what she does.) Instruct students to form pairs and Turn-and-Talk about their responses.

- Student responses may include:
  - Circe is a Greek goddess of magic. She is sometimes also considered a nymph, witch, enchantress, or sorceress.
  - She is skilled in magic and knows about potions and herbs. She also knows about the magic of metamorphosis and the power of illusion.
  - Circe comes from the Greek word meaning, “to secure with hoops” or “hoop around,” referring to her ability to use magic.
  - In “The Odyssey,” she transforms Odysseus’s men into animals, but he enlists the god Hermes to help and is able to get his men released from her spell.
  - Odysseus and his men stay at Circe’s mansion for a year before she offers alternative routes for them to get home.

Instruct student pairs to discuss the following question:

**How does Circe in the novel relate to the mythical Circe?**

- The mythical Circe was the goddess of magic and sometimes considered a witch. Circe in the novel seems to Milkman like “the witch who chased him down dark alleys” in his childhood dreams (p. 239). The mythical Circe was responsible for helping Odysseus get home, and Morrison’s Circe guides Milkman to the cave, a place of great importance to his family.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

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- Students will be held accountable for the questions and responses that they generated for homework during Activity 3: Jigsaw Discussion.

### Activity 3: Jigsaw Discussion

65%

Transition students to the jigsaw discussion by creating groups of four. These are the “home” groups. Instruct student groups to decide among themselves which two group members are responsible for which of the following excerpts:

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- Pages 238-248 from “His hat had been knocked off by the first branches” to “back over the humming of the dogs.”
- Pages 248-258 from “But the humming and the smell followed him” to “And maybe somebody in Virginia would know. Milkman followed in her tracks.”

Instruct students to leave their home groups to form small “expert” groups so that groups are now based on the section of text for which each student is responsible (e.g., students responsible for pages 238-248 come together to form groups). To keep the expert groups small, there may be more than one expert group for each section of text. Inform students that expert groups are those that read, analyze, and become class experts on their section of the text so that they can share their understanding with their home groups.

Explain to students that they should answer all questions, but that those marked with an asterisk (\*) are key questions for consideration during their expert and home group discussions. Instruct students to annotate and take notes. Remind students that annotating and taking notes helps them keep track of evidence they will use in assessments (W.11-12.9.a).

Explain to students that annotating and taking notes also helps them in their roles as experts when they return to their home groups for further discussion. Inform students that as experts, they are expected to synthesize their expert group discussions in order to report back to their home groups, stimulating and propelling the discussion of their sections. Additionally, explain to students that as experts, they should be prepared to answer their peers’ questions about their excerpt.

- Students may use the 12 LC Speaking and Listening Rubric and Checklist to guide their discussions.
- Consider reminding students of their previous work with SL.11-12.1.a, which requires that students come to class having read the material and asks them to explicitly draw on evidence from the text to support their discussion.
- Consider reminding students of their previous work with SL.11-12.1.c, which requires that students pose and respond to questions and qualify or justify their own points of agreement and disagreement with other students.
- Consider reminding students of their previous work with SL.11-12.1.d, which requires that students seek to understand and respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives in order to deepen the investigation of their position and observations.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider posting or projecting the following guiding question to support students throughout this lesson:

**How does Milkman act in the new places he visits in this excerpt?**

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Post or project the following questions for students analyzing pages 238-248 (from “His hat had been knocked off by the first branches” to “back over the humming of the dogs”) to answer in their expert groups.

Provide students with the definitions of *coiffure* and *rebuffed*.

- 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 *coiffure* and *rebuffed* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the definitions of *repelled*, *seductive*, *devouring*, *dainty*, and *nonchalantly*.
  - Students write the definitions of *repelled*, *seductive*, *devouring*, *dainty*, and *nonchalantly* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

**\*Why does Milkman observe that “never ... had he felt so lonely” (p. 238)?**

- Milkman feels lonely because the house reminds him of sadness from his own childhood, when he “used to watch the sky out the window,” “wishing he could fly” (p. 238). Also, Milkman associates his own lonely childhood with Pilate and Macon’s terrible time in the house of the people who had murdered their father: “how imprisoned they felt, how difficult it was to see the sky from their room,” and how “without knowing who killed their father, they instinctively hated the murderer’s house” (p. 238).

**How do Morrison’s word choices to describe the house on pages 238-239 develop the setting?**

- Student responses may include:
  - Morrison’s description of the house as “dark, ruined, evil,” a place where “nothing stirred,” and where Milkman sees “the eyes of a child peer at him over the sill of the one second-story window the ivy had not covered” (p. 238). These word choices suggest the house is frightening and full of supernatural elements.
  - Morrison uses sensory language to describe the odor of the house, which is initially so foul it causes Milkman “to spill the little breakfast he’d eaten,” but then changes to a “seductive” smell like “sweet spicy perfume” (p. 239). Morrison’s word choices suggest the house is both repulsive and inviting at the same time.

**What does the description of Circe suggest about Milkman’s character?**



- Milkman considers who the woman could be: “the witch who chased [Milkman]” (p. 239) in his dreams or “[p]erhaps this woman is Circe. But Circe is dead ... although the woman was talking to him, she might in any case still be dead” (p. 240). The ambiguity or uncertainty of Circe’s nature does not seem to trouble Milkman, which is consistent with his previous acceptance of supernatural people and events, such as the tulips that suffocate his mother.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle, consider posing the following scaffolding questions:

#### How does Morrison describe Circe on pages 240-242?

- When Circe speaks, she sounds younger than she looks: “out of [her] toothless mouth came the strong, mellifluous voice of a twenty-year-old girl” (p. 240). Also, “she had dainty habits” but her clothes were “torn and filthy” (p. 242). Circe is confusing because her young voice does not match her old face; her elegant habits do not match her dirty clothes.

#### How does the description of Circe on page 240 help clarify the meaning of the word *mellifluous*? (L.11-12.4.a)

- Milkman describes Circe as “so old she was colorless” and her voice as “strong, mellifluous” like that “of a twenty-year-old girl” (p. 240). The contrast of age and youth surprises Milkman, so *mellifluous* is a word that must have a meaning that contrasts the description of an old woman, or “sweet or smoothly flowing; sweet-sounding.”

#### \*What does Milkman’s conversation with Circe on pages 246-248 demonstrate about his character?

- Milkman demonstrates that he misunderstands others by suggesting Circe is loyal, when in fact she is vengeful. Milkman mistakes Circe’s continued presence in the Butler house as her “still [being] loyal” to the oppressive white family (p. 247). Circe scolds him for “hav[ing] about as much sense as a fart” (p. 247). She explains that she is still in the house because she “want[s] to see it all go, make sure it does go, and that nobody fixes it up” (p. 247).

#### How does Circe’s life mirror Guitar’s life?

- Circe is committed to a life of revenge, just like Guitar. Circe stays in the Butler house to make sure it “crumble[s] and rot[s]” (p. 247) as an act of vengeance against the greedy, murderous white owners who loved the house. She explains, “They loved it. Stole for it, lied for it, killed for it” (p. 247). Like Guitar, who kills white people when

African Americans are unjustly killed, Circe dedicates herself to making sure the Butler house is ruined, as justice for the crimes they committed on behalf of the house.

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Post or project the following questions for students analyzing pages 248-258 (from “But the humming and the smell followed him” to “And maybe somebody in Virginia would know. Milkman followed in her tracks”) to answer in their expert group.

Provide students with the definition of *untrammelled*.

- Students may be familiar with this word. Consider asking students to volunteer a definition before providing one to the group.
  - Students write the definition of *untrammelled* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the definitions of *agile*, *gauge*, and *dolly*.
  - Students write the definitions of *agile*, *gauge*, and *dolly* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

**\*What difficulties does Milkman face on the journey to the cave? What do these difficulties suggest about Milkman?**

- Student responses may include:
  - Milkman’s journey to the cave is difficult because he has to cross a river, where he “soak[s]” “his shoes” and “his cigarettes” (p. 249). Milkman has no path to follow, and the terrain is “untrammelled ground” (p. 250). Finally, Milkman has the “difficult, but not dangerous, climb” up to the cave (p. 250).
  - These difficulties demonstrate how incapable Milkman is of surviving and relying on himself alone. He realizes “maybe he could have found a narrower part to cross” (p. 249) to make his river crossing easier. He doubts that his ancestors “tore their clothes as he had, climbing twenty feet of steep rock” (p. 251), thus, showing that Milkman is ill prepared for this challenging journey. This struggle indicates how Milkman’s sheltered life has left him unable to handle real challenges.

**\*How does the paragraph that begins “As soon as he put his foot on the first stone” (pp. 250-251) further develop Milkman’s character?**

- Milkman describes his quest as a “Las Vegas” trip with “buried treasure” and “auctions, bank vaults, and heroin deals” (p. 251). These images suggest that Milkman

is obsessed with the money in the cave. However, as Milkman continues his stream-of-consciousness reflections about the feeling of “candy and sex and soft twinkling lights” (pp. 250-251), it becomes clear that succeeding on his mission is about what it feels like “to win” (p. 251). For Milkman, “[t]here was nothing like it in the world” (p. 251), which emphasizes his obsession with the gold and demonstrates his selfish, immature nature.

**How does Mr. Garnett react when Milkman offers him money? What does this interaction convey about Milkman’s character development?**

- Student responses may include:
  - Mr. Garnett gives Milkman a ride and does not expect anything in return. As he tells Milkman, “I ain’t got much, but I can afford a Coke and a lift now and then” (p. 255). Mr. Garnett’s attitude demonstrates an idea of a community that helps its members out without expecting anything in return.
  - This interaction demonstrates that Milkman remains an outsider from the community because he is selfish and not used to being in a relationship that requires equal give and take. He asks Mr. Garnett, “What do I owe you?” (p. 255), which shows that Milkman considers payment as a primary way of interacting with others.

**\*What do Milkman’s reflections about the gold on page 257 suggest about his current desires?**

- Milkman describes different reasons he “thought” he wanted the gold: “in the name of Macon Dead’s Georgia peaches” and in the name of Circe, Reverend Cooper, and his friends. He also thought he wanted the gold to prove to Guitar he could be faithful and capable and “erase what looked like doubt in [Guitar’s] face.” As Milkman goes through this inventory, he realizes that the only concrete reason he wants the gold is “because it was gold and he wanted to own it. Free,” which suggests he still wants the gold so he can be independent and free of his family.

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When expert groups complete their analysis of their aspect of the text, instruct students to return to their home group in which each member has explored one of the two excerpts of the text. Each student should present the analysis from the expert group to his or her home group members for discussion.

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:

**Analyze how Milkman’s journey in pages 238-258 develops his character.**

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 259-281 of *Song of Solomon* (from “The women’s hands were empty. No pocketbook, no change purse” to “on the earth and on the place where he walked. And he did not limp.”) 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 their questions for discussion.

- Students following along.

## Homework

Read pages 259-281 of *Song of Solomon* (from “The women’s hands were empty. No pocketbook, no change purse” to “on the earth and on the place where he walked. And he did not limp”) and annotate for character development. Also, develop 2-3 discussion questions focused on character development and prepare possible answers to your questions for discussion.