

## 12 LC

## Lesson 4

## Introduction

In this lesson, students analyze pages 31-43 of *Song of Solomon* (from “Only Magdalene called Lena and First Corinthians were genuinely happy” to “‘Shaking like leaves,’ she murmured, ‘just like leaves’”) in which Milkman meets Pilate for the first time, and she shares the details of her father’s death. Students analyze and discuss Pilate’s character development through the story she tells Milkman and Guitar. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: How do Pilate’s stories on pages 40-43 further develop her character?

For homework, students read and annotate pages 43-55 of *Song of Solomon*. Also, students develop 2-3 questions focused on character development and Morrison’s structural choices and prepare possible answers to the questions for discussion. Additionally, students record in their journals or notebooks any new questions that emerge during their reading, and write answers to any earlier questions that they have resolved.

## 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)	
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 do Pilate's stories on pages 40-43 further develop her character?

**High Performance Response(s)**

A High Performance Response should:

- Analyze how the stories Pilate tells further develop her character (e.g., The stories Pilate relates on pages 40-43 demonstrate that Pilate is as a master storyteller, a believer in the supernatural, and a caring individual. When Pilate talks about how her and Macon's father died, and how his ghost visited them as children, she interrupts her story with a different story about a man she tried to help rescue during his own supernatural experience of feeling like he was falling off a cliff "[s]tanding right there on that yellow and white and red linoleum" of his kitchen (p. 41). Instead of telling the man that there "wasn't no cliff in that kitchen" as she was at first tempted to do, Pilate holds the man "so he couldn't fall" (p. 41). Both this anecdote and the story of her father's ghost illustrate her firm belief in the supernatural and demonstrate Pilate's willingness to care for others. Additionally, the vivid way Pilate tells both stories serves to establish her as a masterful storyteller, evident by Guitar's interest in the story when he encourages her to continue, "Told her what? What'd you say?" (p. 41).).

## Vocabulary

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

- feigning (v.) - representing fictitiously; putting on an appearance of
- unkempt (adj.) - unpolished; rough; crude
- pervading (v.) - becoming spread throughout all parts of
- semi-stupor (n.) - a condition in which someone is almost not able to think normally because of being drunk, drugged, tired, etc.

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

- unfettered (v.) - freed from restraint; liberated

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

- liberate (v.) - to give freedom or more freedom to someone
- legitimate (adj.) - allowed according to rules or laws
- reluctance (n.) - doubt about doing something
- manipulating (v.) - moving or controlling (something) with your hands or by using a machine
- barren (adj.) - empty
- narcotic (adj.) - having the power to make someone sleepy, as if on a drug
- lest (conj.) - for fear that; used to say that you do not want something to happen

## 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, W.11-12.9.a, L.11-12.4.a</li> <li>• Text: <i>Song of Solomon</i> by Toni Morrison, pages 31-43</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. 60%</li> <li>4. 10%</li> <li>5. 5%</li> </ol>

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## 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.
	<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 and discuss pages 31-43, paying particular attention to how the stories Pilate tells contribute to her character development. Students engage in a discussion as well as complete a brief writing assignment to close the lesson.

- Students look at the agenda.

### Activity 2: Homework Accountability

20%

Instruct students to take out their responses to the previous lesson's homework assignment. (Read and annotate pages 31-43 of *Song of Solomon*. Also, develop 2-3 discussion questions focused on how Morrison develops characters during the family drive in the Packard and prepare possible answers to your questions for discussion.)

Instruct students to form pairs and discuss the questions they developed for homework, specifically focusing on how Morrison develops the characters during the family drive in the Packard (RL.11-12.3).

- Student questions may include:

**What does the repetition in the description of “Macon Dead’s Packard” (p. 32) further illustrate about Macon’s character?**

- Morrison describes how Macon Dead’s Packard is a source of amusement for the poorer community on Not Doctor Street, because the “wide green Packard belied what they thought a car was for” (p. 32). This idea begins a series of observations about how Macon did *not* use his car, further separating himself from the common “black people” he parades by on his way to “the wealthy white neighborhoods.” Macon and his family have not experienced events like driving “over twenty miles an hour” or using “rope [to hold] the door to its frame” (p. 32). Given the description of Macon thus far as a person driven by material possessions, the name “Macon Dead’s hearse” (p. 33) illustrates that not only does the car itself not have life, but neither does the man driving it.

**How do Morrison’s descriptions of how Milkman rides in the Packard (p. 32) and his accident (p. 35) contribute to his development as a character?**

- Milkman’s riding position in the Packard puts him at a physical disadvantage because he is riding backward, seeing everything he passes rather than what is ahead of him. Morrison describes how “flying blind, and not knowing where he was going—just where he had been—troubled [Milkman]” (p. 32). This description conveys how conflicted Milkman feels, even at a young age, when he is only able to see what he ultimately “left behind” (p. 32). Similarly, Milkman urinates on his sister’s dress because he is looking behind himself. This repetition of the different struggles of being backward or concentrating “on things behind him” contributes to the development of Milkman as someone who believes “there were no future to be had” for him (p. 35).

**How does Morrison’s description of the ride in the Packard develop the relationship between Milkman and the rest of his family?**

- Morrison’s description of the rides in the Packard suggests that Milkman is out of place with his family. He does not have a place to sit in the car and was “[p]ressed in the front seat between his parents” or forced to “rid[e] backward” which “made him uneasy” (pp. 31-32). Unlike the rest of his family who took some pleasure in the ride, Milkman found even as a “little boy [the ride] was simply a burden” (p. 31), further emphasizing Milkman’s isolation from his family.

How does the dialogue between Macon Dead and Ruth on pages 33-35 further develop their relationship?

- In the dialogue on pages 33-35, Macon insults and scolds Ruth. He threatens, “If you say one more thing to me about the way I drive, you’re going to walk back home. I mean it” (p. 34). This dialogue demonstrates that not only is the relationship between Macon and Ruth strained, but Macon aggressively and condescendingly controls his wife.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

- 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 (W. 11-12.9.a).

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

**What do Pilate’s stories demonstrate about her character?**

Instruct student groups to refer to pages 35-40 (from “But if the future did not arrive, the present did extend itself” to “they sat in a pleasant semi-stupor, listening to her go on and on”) 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 *feigning*, *unkempt*, *pervading*, and *semi-stupor*.

- 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 *feigning*, *unkempt*, *pervading*, and *semi-stupor* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with definitions of *liberate*, *legitimate*, *reluctance*, *manipulating*, *barren*, and *narcotic*.

- Students write the definitions of *liberate*, *legitimate*, *reluctance*, *manipulating*, *barren*, and *narcotic* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

**\*How do Milkman’s ideas about Pilate compare to his actual interaction with her?**

- Student responses may include:
  - When Milkman sets out to visit Pilate, she is the mysterious woman “his father had forbidden him to go near” and about whom he has heard “unbelievable but entirely possible stories” (p. 36).
  - Milkman expects Pilate to be “ugly, dirty, poor, and drunk” (p. 37) because he grew up hearing these types of descriptions about his forbidden aunt. However, in reality, Milkman finds that Pilate is “unkempt, yes, but not dirty” and the “whites of her fingernails were like ivory” (p. 38).
  - When Pilate scolds Milkman for saying “Hi” (p. 37), Milkman feels ashamed because he does not know how to respond properly, not because he is embarrassed by Pilate’s appearance. Milkman had expected to be ashamed of her and instead he is ashamed of himself in her presence.
  - Milkman realizes through his interaction with Pilate that she is a different person than he thought he was meeting. The woman “who had one earring, no navel, and looked like a tall black tree” fascinates him (p. 39). And, despite being “ma[de] fun of,” Milkman is in awe of Pilate and “he knew he could have watched her all day” (p. 38).
- **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle, consider posing the following scaffolding questions:

**Why does Milkman want to visit Pilate?**

- Milkman wants to visit Pilate because the idea of her makes him “spellbound,” primarily because “his father had forbidden him to go near” her and because he has heard “unbelievable but entirely possible stories” about her (p. 36). Milkman and Guitar are on a quest to “find[] out the truth” about Pilate (p. 36).

**How does Milkman’s visit with Pilate on pages 37-38 affect his view of her?**

- When Milkman interacts with Pilate, he realizes that “the queer aunt whom his sixth-grade schoolmates teased him about and whom he hated” (pp. 37-38) is actually a strong, independent woman. Although she is not beautiful, she is interesting because of her appearance, including her “berry-black lips that made her look as though she wore make-up, the earring,” and her physical stature,



which Milkman notes is “as tall as his father” (p. 38). Milkman is fascinated by Pilate and feels like “he could have watched her all day” (p. 38).

**How does the description of Pilate’s home contribute to the development of her character?**

- Pilate’s home demonstrates her lack of pretense, lack of concern for objects, and her welcoming personality. Although Pilate’s space is “both barren and cluttered” with “no furniture,” it is also “large [and] sunny” (p. 39) and the attraction for Guitar and Milkman is described as “narcotic” (p. 40), or strong and soothing. Everything in the house is “made for some other purpose” (p. 39), which suggests that Pilate is both frugal and resourceful. Pilate’s home is also very open, and the sunlight is “strong and unfettered because there were no curtains or shades at the windows” (p. 40), which mirrors her open and welcoming personality.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle, consider posing the following scaffolding question:

**On page 40, how does the description of Pilate’s house help clarify the meaning of the word *unfettered*? (L.11-12.4.a)**

- Morrison describes Pilate’s house as having “the sun streaming in, strong.” The house has plenty of sunlight because “there were no curtains or shades at the windows.” This description creates an image of a bright room where sunlight flows freely without being held back. Thus, the word *unfettered* must mean “freed from restraint; liberated.”

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

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Instruct student groups to refer to pages 40-43 (from “Hadn’t been for your daddy, I wouldn’t be here today” to “Shaking like leaves,” she murmured, ‘just like leaves.’”) for evidence to support their responses as they discuss the following questions in groups before sharing out with the class.

- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the definition of *lest*.
  - Students write the definition of *lest* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

**What happened to Pilate and Macon’s father?**

- Student responses should include:

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- He was killed by men who “snuck up from behind and blew him five feet into the air” (p. 40).
- He came back as a ghost. Pilate reports that after he died, he appeared to them: “in front of [Pilate and Macon] was the back of our daddy,” an event that Pilate was more willing to accept as fact than Macon, who said it “wasn’t real” (p. 41).

**\*What do Pilate and Macon’s different interpretations of their father’s return suggest about their characters?**

- Pilate believes in the supernatural and Macon does not. Macon claims the ghost of their father “wasn’t real” while Pilate does not care if “the thing you scared of is real or not” (p. 41), because the emotion of being scared feels very real.

**\*How does Pilate’s telling of the story of “a man and his wife ... down in Virginia” (pp. 41-42) further develop her character?**

- Student responses may include:
  - Pilate further establishes herself as a master storyteller. She describes how “it took three minutes, three whole minutes to go from a standing upright position to when he mashed his face on the floor,” which seems impossible, but Pilate tells her story with such conviction that both Guitar and Milkman are “fascinated” (p. 42).
  - Pilate’s story further establishes her as someone who cares about others. Instead of dismissing the man’s story, she offers to “hold on to him so he couldn’t fall” (p. 41).
  - Pilate further demonstrates her belief in the supernatural or mystical; specifically she uses this example to support the feeling she had “being in those woods” (p. 41) confronted by the ghost of her father. She argues that the supernatural does not exist just for her, further supporting her own experience with her father’s ghost.

**\*How does Pilate’s use of language in her storytelling further develop her character?**

- Pilate’s use of language demonstrates her skills as a storyteller. She describes how something about her father’s ghost “scared us” and that “it was like looking at a face under water” (p. 43), which conveys simply but clearly the indirect look of a ghost.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle, considering posing the following scaffolding question:

**How does Pilate’s description of different colors on pages 40-41 further develop her character?**

- Pilate uses figurative language and personifies the various “kinds of black” (p. 40), asserting that there are many shades of the same color. This description contributes to her skills as an eloquent storyteller who finds value in the details.

**\*How does the structure of Pilate’s story contribute to her character development?**

- The structure of Pilate’s story is disjointed, which allows her to control and elaborate on her story as she sees fit to keep her audience interested. She tells the story of both her father’s death and the memory of her mother who died, with an anecdote about a man down in Virginia in the middle of it. This leaves Guitar “fascinated, his eyes glittering with lights” (p. 42) and both “boys watch[ing], afraid to say anything lest they ruin the next part of her story, and afraid to remain silent lest she not go on with its telling” (p. 43). As a master storyteller, Pilate structures her story in a way that makes Milkman and Guitar eager to know more.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

## Activity 4: Quick Write

10%

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

**How do Pilate’s stories on pages 40-43 further develop her 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 and annotate pages 43-55 of *Song of Solomon* (from “Suddenly she lifted her head and made a

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sound” to “Starting Monday, I’m going to teach you how”). Also, instruct students to develop 2-3 discussion questions focused on character development and Morrison’s structural choices (RL.11-12.3, RL.11-12.5), and prepare possible answers to the questions for discussion.

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

- Students follow along.

## Homework

Read and annotate pages 43-55 of *Song of Solomon* (from “Suddenly she lifted her head and made a sound” to “Starting Monday, I’m going to teach you how”). Also, develop 2-3 discussion questions focused on character development and Morrison’s structural choices, and prepare possible answers to the questions for discussion.

Record in your journal or notebook any new questions that emerge during your reading, and write answers to any earlier questions that you have resolved.