

## 12 LC

## Lesson 23

## Introduction

In this lesson, students analyze pages 326-334 of *Song of Solomon* (from “The fan belt didn’t last long enough” to “But he returned with a box of Hagar’s hair”). In this excerpt, Milkman returns home, shares the discoveries from his journey with his family, and finds out Hagar is dead. Students analyze the excerpt in groups, focusing on how motifs relate to central ideas. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: Identify a motif in pages 329-334 and explain how the motif relates to two central ideas in the excerpt.

For homework, students read and annotate pages 334-337 of *Song of Solomon*. Also, students develop 2-3 discussion questions focused on the development of characters through the use of language and structural choices, and prepare possible answers to their questions for discussion.

## Standards

Assessed Standard(s)	
RL.11-12.2	Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.
Addressed Standard(s)	
W.11-12.9.a	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.

- Identify a motif in pages 329-334 and explain how the motif relates to two central ideas in the excerpt.

**High Performance Response(s)**

A High Performance Response should:

- Identify a motif (e.g., naming, flying).
- Identify two central ideas (e.g. community, identity, freedom, love).
- Analyze how the motif relates to the selected central ideas (e.g. The motif of “naming” relates to the central ideas of community and identity in this excerpt by demonstrating how the naming of individuals and places by the community influences individuals’ identity and contributes to a shared history among community members. Milkman thinks of the names of the “black men” and women he knows, given to them by members of the community based on their “yearnings, gestures, flaws, events, mistakes, weaknesses” (p. 330). The names influence a person’s identity within a community by describing one aspect of the person that the community has identified or valued. The names also “b[ear] witness” (p. 330) to the community’s common history and are an important part of keeping track of that history. For example, the community names Not Doctor Street “in memory of [Milkman’s] grandfather, who was the first colored man of consequence in that city” (p. 329). The community resists the white authorities and names the street after Dr. Foster to pay “respect to whatever it was that made him *be* a doctor” (p. 329), honoring the doctor’s efforts and recording their own efforts to honor him.).

## Vocabulary

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

- iridescent (adj.) - displaying a play of lustrous colors like those of the rainbow
- ocher (adj.) - pale yellow to an orangish or reddish yellow
- deranged (v.) - made insane

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

- defuse (v.) - to make less dangerous, tense, or embarrassing

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

- quarry (n.) - a place where large amounts of stone are dug out of the ground
- biding (v.) - waiting for the right time before doing something
- consequence (n.) - importance or value
- yearnings (n.) - strong desires or wishes for something or to do something
- radiant (adj.) - bright and shining
- rickety (adj.) - not strong or stable and likely to break

## Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
<b>Standards &amp; Text:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standards: RL.11-12.2, W.11-12.9.a, L.11-12.4.a, b</li> <li>Text: <i>Song of Solomon</i> by Toni Morrison, pages 326-334</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. 15%</li> <li>3. 60%</li> <li>4. 15%</li> <li>5. 5%</li> </ol>

## Materials

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- 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 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.11-12.2. In this lesson, students analyze pages 326-334 of *Song of Solomon*, focusing on the excerpt's motifs and how they relate to central ideas.

- Students look at the agenda.

### Activity 2: Homework Accountability

15%

Instruct students to take out their responses to the first part of the previous lesson's homework assignment. (Read pages 326-337 of *Song of Solomon* and annotate for the development of central ideas. Develop 2-3 discussion questions focused on how central ideas develop, interact, or build on one another in the text and prepare possible answers to your questions for discussion.)

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Instruct students to form pairs and talk about the discussion questions they developed for homework, specifically focusing on how central ideas develop, interact, and build on one another in the text (RL.11-12.2).

- Student questions may include:

**How does Milkman and Sweet’s conversation about Solomon’s song further develop a central idea?**

- Milkman and Sweet’s conversation further develops the central idea of identity. Sweet tells Milkman that Solomon’s song is “a game we used to play when we was little,” to which Milkman says, “Everybody did. Everybody but me. But I can play it now. It’s my game now” (p. 327). His response suggests that everyone had a connection to their family history except for him, but now that he has discovered his history, the song has become part of his identity and is “[his] game now” (p. 327).

**How does Milkman’s and Sweet’s interaction about his great-grandfather’s flight contribute to the development of a central idea?**

- Student responses may include:
  - Milkman tells Sweet that his “great-granddaddy could fly” because he “got fed up” with slavery (p. 328), thus developing the central idea of freedom. He sees his great-grandfather’s flight as a way to achieve freedom from slavery, which develops Milkman’s view that freedom is gained through flight or escape.
  - Sweet’s question, “Who’d he leave behind?” (p. 328) shows that she considers Solomon’s family and the other slaves who did not leave with Solomon. Her question complicates the central idea of freedom by demonstrating that flying away means people are left behind. But Milkman answers excitedly, “Everybody! He left everybody down on the ground and he sailed off like a black eagle” (p. 328). His response indicates that he is not as concerned with who gets left behind as he is with the freedom of flight itself.
- 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\*.)

Instruct students to take out their responses to the second part of the previous lesson's homework assignment. (Record any new questions that emerge during your reading and write answers to any earlier questions that you have resolved.)

Instruct students to talk in pairs about any additional questions that have emerged while reading.

- Students discuss questions that have emerged while reading *Song of Solomon* and possible answers to those questions.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

### Activity 3: Reading and Discussion

**60%**

Instruct students to form small groups. Post or project the questions below for students to discuss. 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 motifs of flying and naming relate to two central ideas in the text?**

Instruct students to refer to pages 326-331 of *Song of Solomon* (from “The fan belt didn’t last long enough” to “To both questions he could answer yes”) 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 *iridescent*, *ocher*, and *deranged*.

- 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 *iridescent*, *ocher*, and *deranged* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the definitions of *quarry*, *biding*, *consequence*, and *yearnings*.
  - Students write the definitions of *quarry*, *biding*, *consequence*, and *yearnings* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

**How does Milkman's trip influence his understanding of the importance of naming? How does this understanding develop a central idea?**

- Student responses should include:
  - On the bus ride back home, Milkman considers how the renaming of his grandfather as “Macon Dead ... hid from view the real names of people, places, and things. Names that had meaning” (p. 329). Macon Dead was the name given to his grandfather by a white man, which erased part of his history. Milkman realizes that one should “hang on” (p. 329) to one's name once one knows it, so that the name will be remembered.
  - Milkman's consideration of naming develops the central idea of identity by showing that an important part of forming identity is in knowing one's past and the names and stories of one's ancestors. Milkman's thoughts about how the names from his various communities came “from yearnings, gestures, flaws, events, mistakes, weaknesses” (p. 330) demonstrate how the names represent the identities of individuals. Also, because the names come from the community, they are a record of the community's shared history.

**\*What do Milkman's thoughts about the naming of “Not Doctor Street” (p. 329) suggest about the community of Southside? How does this thinking further develop the central idea of community?**

- Student responses should include:
  - Milkman realizes that his grandfather “probably didn't deserve” the honor of the people in the community, but the people did not care, since “[t]hey were paying their respect to whatever it was that made him *be* a doctor in the first place” (p. 329). Because becoming a doctor is an unlikely achievement for the people in the Southside community, they honored the achievement by naming the street after Milkman's grandfather.
  - This naming of the street develops the central idea of community by showing how the Southside community paid respect to Milkman's grandfather even though he was “arrogant, color-struck, snobbish” (p. 229). The community's pride in Milkman's grandfather's achievement was more important than any negative feelings the Southside community had towards him.

**How does Milkman's listing of names on page 330 demonstrate the relationship between two central ideas in the text?**

- Milkman's listing of names demonstrates how the two central ideas of identity and community interact in the text. Milkman thinks of the names of the “black men” and



women he knows, given to them by members of the community based on their “yearnings, gestures, flaws, events, mistakes, weaknesses.” The names influence a person’s identity within a community by describing something about that person that other people in the community have noticed or valued. The names also “b[ear] witness” to a common history that the community shares and are an important part of keeping track of that history.

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

How does Milkman’s description of Guitar on page 330 clarify the meaning of the word *defuse*? (L.11-12.4.a) How do word parts in the word *defuse* help confirm that meaning? (L.11-12.4.b)

- Student responses should include:
  - Milkman thinks that “if Guitar was back in the city” (p. 330) maybe Milkman could *defuse* him. Since Guitar is coming to kill Milkman, the word *defuse* relates to stopping him.
  - The word *defuse* also has the word part *de-*, which means “to take away or separate” and *-fuse*, which is the part of a bomb or firecracker that sets it off. So to *defuse* someone or something must mean “to stop him, her, or it from exploding.”

How does Milkman’s realization about who has “fought for his life” (p. 331) contribute to the development of his character?

- Milkman realizes that “[f]rom the beginning, his mother and Pilate had fought for his life, and he had never so much as made either of them a cup of tea.” This thought demonstrates Milkman’s evolving maturity and empathy by acknowledging the help and support he has received from both Pilate and his mother, while also reflecting his regret about not giving either of them any love in return.

Lead a brief whole class discussion of student responses.

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Instruct students to refer to pages 331–334 of *Song of Solomon* (from “Should I go home first, or go to Pilate’s first?” to “But he returned with a box of Hagar’s hair”) and discuss the following questions in groups before sharing out with the class.

- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the definitions of *radiant* and *rickety*.

- Students write the definitions of *radiant* and *rickety* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

**How does Milkman’s response to Pilate’s behavior upon seeing him contribute to the way he sees the world?**

- Milkman does not expect Pilate to hit him over the head with a bottle, but he considers how he “knew that anything could appear to be something else, and probably was” (pp. 331-332). Milkman recounts the strange events that have happened to him over the course of his life, including Hagar’s attempt to kill him and Guitar’s attempt to “strangle” him (p. 332). Milkman feels that “nothing could be taken for granted” (p. 332) after everything he has seen and experienced, which shows that he views the world as a complicated and insecure place.

**\*How does Milkman’s reaction to the discovery that Hagar is dead demonstrate the interaction of two central ideas in the text?**

- Milkman’s reaction to Hagar’s death demonstrates the interaction of identity and freedom in the text. While Milkman “dreamt of flying” on his journey to uncover his identity and find freedom, “Hagar was dying” (p. 332). Realizing his responsibility for Hagar’s death, Milkman recalls Sweet’s earlier question about his great-grandfather after he flew away: “Who’d he leave behind?” (p. 332) Milkman’s realization that flight and freedom have consequences develops his identity by forcing him to accept his responsibilities to others.

**How does Milkman’s realization that the “children who sang” (p. 332) about Shalimar kept his story alive contribute to Milkman’s character development?**

- Milkman realizes that the people who fly off and leave are not the only important figures. The children who stay behind make sure that the stories of those who leave are remembered: “it was the children who sang about it and kept the story of his leaving alive” (p. 332). Therefore the children play an important role, just as Milkman does in his own quest to find his origins.

**\*How does Pilate’s father’s commandment, “You just can’t fly on off and leave a body” (p. 332), take on new meaning in this excerpt?**

- Student responses may include:
  - Milkman realizes that Pilate wants Milkman to take something of Hagar’s since he is responsible for Hagar’s death, just as Pilate has always kept with her what she believes are the bones of the man she killed. Pilate keeps the bones because her father came to her in a vision and told her, “You just can’t fly on off and leave a

body,” which she took to refer literally to the dead body she and her brother had left behind in the cave.

- Milkman now realizes that the command refers to the ideas of flight and escape, showing that these ideas are more complicated than he and Pilate had once thought. Pilate’s father is also referring to “[h]is own father [who] flew away” (p. 333). Therefore, combining Pilate and her father’s interpretations, Milkman realizes he must have “something that remained of the life he had taken” (p. 332), so that he can always remember the negative effect of when someone “f[lies] off” and leaves someone else behind.

**\*How does Milkman’s decision to keep Hagar’s hair develop Milkman’s character and a central idea in the text?**

- Milkman’s decision develops his character by showing that he has grown to accept responsibility for the decisions he has made, including “flying” off (p. 332) and leaving Hagar behind. Milkman’s realization develops the central ideas of freedom and identity by showing that one cannot be free without taking responsibility for one’s actions.

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:

**Identify a motif in pages 329-334 and explain how the motif relates to two central ideas in the 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%

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to read and annotate pages 334-337 of *Song of Solomon* (from “She wouldn’t set foot on an airplane” to “If you surrendered to the air, you could *ride* it”) (W.11-12.9.a). Also, instruct students to develop 2-3 discussion questions focused on the development of characters through the use of language and structural choices (RL.11-12.3, RL.11-12.4, RL.11-12.5), and prepare possible answers to their questions for discussion.

- Students follow along.

## Homework

Read and annotate pages 334-337 of *Song of Solomon* (from “She wouldn’t set foot on an airplane” to “If you surrendered to the air, you could *ride* it”). Also, develop 2-3 discussion questions focused on the development of characters through the use of language and structural choices, and prepare possible answers to your questions for discussion.