

## 12 LC

## Lesson 16

## Introduction

In this lesson, students analyze the development and interaction of central ideas in pages 219-226 of *Song of Solomon* (from “When Hansel and Gretel stood in the forest” to “Maybe it was fatigue, but the touching of palms seemed a little weak”), in which Milkman approaches a run-down house in the woods of Pennsylvania and recounts an earlier conversation with Guitar. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write and Silent Discussion at the end of the lesson: How do two central ideas interact and build on one another in pages 219-226?

For homework, students conduct a brief search into the mythical character of Circe and write a few brief statements about who she is and what she does. In addition, students read and annotate pages 238-258 of *Song of Solomon*. Also, students develop 2-3 discussion questions focused on how Milkman’s character develops over the course of the excerpt 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	<p>Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.</p> <p>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”).</p>

## Assessment

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**Assessment(s)**

Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson. Students respond to the following prompt, citing textual evidence to support analysis and inferences drawn from the text.

- How do two central ideas interact and build on one another in pages 219-226?

**High Performance Response(s)**

A High Performance Response should:

- Identify two central ideas in pages 219-226 (e.g., identity, freedom, love).
- Analyze how two central ideas interact and build on one another (e.g., The central ideas of freedom and identity further develop through Guitar's conversation with Milkman. Guitar's tells Milkman that being an African-American male carries a special burden because everyone in society is after "the life of the black man" (p. 222). Guitar argues that white men want African-American men "dead or quiet"; white women want African-American men "[t]ame, except in bed"; and African-American women want the African-American men's "whole self" (p. 222) or their "full attention" (p. 223). All of these demands make it difficult for "the black man" to have his own identity. Thus, the central ideas of freedom and identity interact through Guitar's claim that the African-American male identity is in part defined by a lack of freedom.).

## Vocabulary

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

- assuaged (v.) - made milder or less severe; relieved; eased; mitigated
- macadam (n.) - a road surface made of compressed layers of small broken stones

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

- None.

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

- raucous (adj.) - loud and unpleasant to listen to
- galloping (adj.) - quickly developing or increasing
- invulnerability (n.) - the state of being impossible to harm, damage, or defeat

## 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</li> <li>Text: <i>Song of Solomon</i> by Toni Morrison, pages 219-226</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 and Silent Discussion</li> <li>5. Closing</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 5%</li> <li>2. 15%</li> <li>3. 50%</li> <li>4. 25%</li> <li>5. 5%</li> </ol>

## Materials

- Student copies of the Central Ideas and Motifs Tracking Tool (refer to 12 LC Lesson 3) (optional)—students may need additional blank copies
- Student copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist (refer 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.
①	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 read and discuss pages 219-226 of *Song of Solomon*, focusing on the interaction and development of central ideas within the excerpt.

- 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 and annotate pages 219-238 of *Song of Solomon*. Also, develop 2-3 discussion questions focused on how two or more central ideas develop and build on one another over the course of the excerpt and prepare possible answers to your questions for discussion.)

Instruct students to form pairs and talk about questions they developed for homework, specifically analyzing how two or more central ideas develop and build on one another over the course of the text (RL.11-12.2).

- Student questions may include:

**How does Milkman's interaction with Reverend Cooper demonstrate the development of two central ideas?**

- Milkman's interaction with Reverend Cooper demonstrates not only that Milkman is becoming more aware of his own identity, but also how he needs to change before he can become an active member of a community. When he meets Reverend Cooper, Milkman realizes that he "had never had to try to make a pleasant impression on a stranger before" and he "did not remember ever asking anybody in the world how they were" (p. 229). Milkman discovers that his selfish attitudes have prevented him from participating in community life, thus demonstrating how one's identity is influenced by the community.

**How does Morrison further develop the story of Milkman's grandfather? How does his story relate to central ideas of the text?**

- Morrison continues the story of the original Macon Dead through stories told by Reverend Cooper and "every old man in the town" (p. 234). The men paint a picture of a miraculous farm where "real peaches" grew and they had feasts "when hunting was over" (p. 234). The way the men represent Milkman's grandfather develops the central idea of freedom, because Milkman's grandfather achieved personal freedom through his own hard work and determination.
- If student discussion is rich, text-dependent, and building toward the assessment prompt, consider extending the discussions beyond the allotted time. 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

**50%**

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:** 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 questions to support students throughout this lesson:

**How does one central idea (love, identity, freedom, or community) develop in this section of the text?**

Instruct student groups to refer to pages 219-222 (from “When Hansel and Gretel stood in the forest” to “I mean what it is they really want”) for evidence to support their responses as they discuss the following questions before sharing out with the class.

Provide students with the definitions of *assuaged* and *macadam*.

- 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 *assuaged* and *macadam* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the definitions of *raucous*, *galloping*, and *invulnerability*.
  - Students write the definitions of *raucous*, *galloping*, and *invulnerability* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

**How does Milkman’s airplane ride further develop his character?**

- Student responses may include:
  - The airplane ride demonstrates that Milkman was “fed up” and had to “leave quickly” (p. 221) his old life where he was “constrained” by his family’s demands like “Lena’s anger” and “his father’s bottomless greed” (p. 220).
  - The plane ride represents freedom to Milkman who feels “exhilarated” and thinks “it was not possible to believe he had ever made a mistake, or could” (p. 220). This reaction demonstrates that Milkman feels like a new and free man on an exciting journey.
  - Milkman’s ride on the airplane represents an important separation from his childhood and his one childhood friend, Guitar. Milkman “wanted to do this by himself,” even though a part of him is upset that “Guitar was not there too” (p. 220). This desire for independence even from his friend is an important step toward maturity for Milkman.

**\*How does Milkman’s flight further develop central ideas in this section of the text?**

- Student responses may include:
  - Milkman begins the journey in order to free himself from the constraints of his family, which he envisions as “the wings of all those other people’s nightmares” (p. 220), thus emphasizing that for Milkman, freedom means leaving behind his family and their problems.

- Milkman's identity develops as he sets out on his journey to find the gold. He decides that he wants to start this journey on his own "with no input from anybody" (p. 220). Away from the "nightmares" of others that "constrain[]" him (p. 220), Milkman begins to have the freedom to explore his identity. He knows that he does not "want to be [his] old man's office boy no more" (p. 222), but he is unsure yet of the person he wants to be.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

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Instruct student groups to refer to pages 222-226 (from "Guitar stretched his legs. 'They want your life, man.'" to "Maybe it was fatigue, but the touching of palms seemed a little weak") for evidence to support their responses as they discuss the following questions before sharing out with the class.

**\*How does Guitar's statement "Everybody wants the life of a black man" (p. 222) further develop a central idea in the text?**

- Student responses should include:
  - Guitar's statement develops the central idea of freedom. Guitar argues that being an African-American male carries a special burden because everyone in society is after "the life of the black man." White men, white women, and African-American women all want different parts of "the life of a black man." These demands on how an African-American man should live his life restrict his freedom.
  - Guitar's statements develop the central idea of identity. The desires of others define the identity of a "black man." Guitar states that white men want African-American men "dead or quiet"; white women want African-American men "[t]ame, except in bed"; and African-American women want African-American men's "whole self" (p. 222) or their "full attention" (p. 223). All of these demands make it difficult for "the black man" to have his own identity.

**What does Guitar's claim that you can "choose what to die for" (p. 223) suggest about his character?**

- Guitar implies that people "can choose what to die for" by dedicating their lives to a cause. Guitar questions the worth of a man without a cause, asking, "What good is a man's life if he can't even choose what to die for." In a world in which everyone wants to control "the life of a black man" (p. 222), Guitar attempts to take control of his own life by dedicating himself to the cause of the Seven Days.



**\*How does Guitar explain that his work with the Seven Days “is about love” (p. 223)?**

- Guitar says that his work with the Seven Days “is about love,” because he feels it is his duty to protect his community. Milkman asks, “Why worry about the colored woman at all?” (p. 223), because Guitar has just been criticizing African-American women. Guitar responds, “Because she’s *mine*” (p. 223), emphasizing the sense of ownership and love Guitar feels for his whole community, even those he criticizes.

**How does Guitar’s memory of his mother on page 224 explain his reaction to Pilate’s performance at the jail?**

- Guitar’s anger at Pilate seems to be fueled by how it reminds him of his own mother’s actions after the death of his father. Guitar feels upset at how Pilate “slipped into those Jemima shoes” (p. 224) in front of the police. Guitar is nauseated at the memory of his mother’s acceptance of the \$40 and her “willingness to love” the white foreman responsible for his father’s death (p. 224). Guitar connects the memory of his father’s death and his mother’s subservience with Pilate’s actions in the police station, which causes him to feel “the nausea all over again” (p. 225).

**\*How does Guitar and Milkman’s conversation further develop central ideas in this section of the text?**

- Student responses may include:
  - Guitar’s conversation with Milkman explores the central idea of love. Guitar describes love as one of the ways in which women want to control men. He says that black women “want your full attention,” or otherwise think “that you don’t love them” (p. 223). This idea of love continues to develop the idea of possessive love that Morrison introduces through Ruth’s and Hagar’s love for Milkman in Part 1 of the text.
  - Guitar’s conversation with Milkman develops the central idea of community by identifying all African-American men with the struggles of the “black man” (p. 222). Guitar describes how the rest of the world is against black men. He says, “Everybody wants the life of a black man. Everybody” (p. 222), which establishes a community of us versus them.
  - The central idea of identity is also present in the conversation because Milkman does not identify with the “black man’s” struggle as defined by Guitar (p. 222). As Milkman argues with Guitar, he does not even “try to keep disbelief out of his voice” (p. 223), because he does not believe in the racial community that Guitar describes. Milkman argues that his own life experiences contradict the racial community because his own father, “who is a very black man,” tried to kill him

“before [he] was even born” (p. 223). Milkman’s identity differs from that of the “black man” that Guitar describes, emphasizing Milkman’s isolation from others.

- The central idea of love further develops through Guitar’s memories of his father. After the gruesome death of Guitar’s father, who had been “sliced in half,” Guitar’s mother showed “not love, but a willingness to love” the white man who was responsible for his father’s death (p. 224). The love that Guitar’s mother shows is a type of submissive love, the same type which Guitar accuses Pilate of showing to the police in Part 1.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

## Activity 4: Quick Write and Silent Discussion

25%

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

**How do two central ideas interact and build on one another in pages 219-226?**

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.

After students have had an opportunity to respond in writing to the prompt, instruct them to complete a Silent Discussion in their groups, using their written responses. Students pass their written response around in their groups. At each pass, students respond briefly to the original response or another comment a group member has made. Remind students to use evidence to support, build upon, or respectfully contradict what other group members write. Once students have completed a full rotation and their original response is returned to them, instruct students to complete a final revision before submitting their response for the lesson assessment.

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- Students participate in a Silent Discussion regarding their Quick Write responses.
- See the High Performance Response at the beginning of this lesson.

## Activity 5: Closing

**5%**

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to conduct a brief search into the mythical character of Circe and write a few brief statements about who she is and what she does.

In addition, instruct students to read and annotate 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”). Also, instruct students to develop 2-3 discussion questions focused on how Milkman’s character develops over the course of the excerpt (RL.11-12.3) and prepare possible answers to their questions for discussion.

- Students follow along.

## Homework

Conduct a brief search into the mythical character of Circe and write a few brief statements about who she is and what she does.

In addition, read and annotate 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”). Also, develop 2-3 discussion questions focused on how Milkman’s character develops over the course of the excerpt and prepare possible answers to your questions for discussion.