

## 12 LC

## Lesson 3

## Introduction

In this lesson, students analyze pages 15-30 of *Song of Solomon* (from “Macon Dead never knew how it came about” to “Pilate swayed like a willow over her stirring”), in which Morrison explores Macon Dead’s perspective on his family and himself. Students work in groups to analyze how Morrison develops a central idea of the text over the course of this passage. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: How does Morrison develop a central idea over the course of pages 15-30?

For homework, students read and annotate pages 31-43 of *Song of Solomon*. Also, students develop 2-3 discussion questions focused on how Morrison develops characters during the family drive in the Packard 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)	
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 a central idea over the course of pages 15-30?

### High Performance Response(s)

A High Performance Response should:

- Identify a central idea that Morrison develops over the course of pages 15-30 (e.g., identity, love).
- Analyze how Morrison develops this central idea (e.g., Macon's reflection on names develops the central idea of identity because his reflections demonstrate how he feels about himself and others. Macon's feeling that the name Milkman is "coated with disgust" (p. 15) is rooted in his fear of the "filthy connection" (p. 17) that he imagines exists between his wife and his son. To Macon, the name "Milkman" represents an aspect of his wife's identity (and by extension his son's) that he finds revolting and frightening. Similarly, Macon hates his own name because his father's name was "done to them by somebody who couldn't have cared less" (p. 18) thus erasing their historical identity. Macon explains that any knowledge that he might have had of an "ancestor ... who had a name that was real" (p. 17) disappeared along with his name, because "who this lithe young man was, and where his cane-stalk legs carried him from or to, could never be known" (p. 18). Macon's account of the story of Pilate's naming emphasizes the value and significance that Macon attributes to possessing a "real ... name given to him at birth with love and seriousness" (p. 17), thus showing how Macon views names as an integral part of one's identity.).

## Vocabulary

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

- begat (v.) - became the father of (someone)
- Magdalene (n.) - Saint Mary Magdalene, a woman whom Jesus cured of evil spirits. In Christian tradition she is usually taken to have been a prostitute.
- First Corinthians (n.) - a book of the New Testament canon of the Christian Bible
- Pilate (n.) - Roman official of Judea, A.D. 26-36; the final authority concerned in the condemnation and execution of Jesus Christ
- bootlegger (n.) - someone who makes or sells alcohol illegally
- navel (n.) - bellybutton

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

- propriety (n.) - the state or quality of being correct or proper

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

- summation (n.) - a brief description of the most important information about something
- odiousness (n.) - the quality of causing hatred or strong dislike
- onyx (adj.) - black, especially jet black
- illiterate (adj.) - not knowing how to read or write
- mortgage (v.) - to give someone a legal claim on (property that you own) in exchange for money that you pay back over a period of years
- chafe (v.) - to become irritated or annoyed
- ecstasy (n.) - a state of very great happiness; extreme delight
- charade (n.) - something that is done in order to pretend something is true when it is not really true
- willow (n.) - a tree that has long, narrow leaves and strong, thin branches that are used to make baskets

## 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, 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 15-30</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

- Copies of the Central Ideas and Motifs Tracking Tool for each student (optional)
- 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 15-30 of *Song of Solomon* (from “Macon Dead never knew how it came about” to “Pilate swayed like a willow over her stirring”), focusing on how Morrison develops a central idea over the course of this passage.

- 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 15-30 of *Song of Solomon*. Also, develop 2-3 discussion questions focused on how Morrison develops the character of Macon Dead and prepare possible answers to your questions for discussion.)

Instruct students to talk in pairs about the discussion questions they developed for homework, specifically focusing on how Morrison develops the character of Macon Dead (RL.11-12.3).

- Student questions may include:

**What does Macon's response to Milkman's "rechristen[ing]" (p. 15) suggest about his relationship with his son?**

- Macon's "refusal to use [the name Milkman] or acknowledge it" (p. 15) because "he guessed ... that this name was not clean. ... it sounded dirty, intimate, and hot" (p. 15) suggests that he regards his son with "disgust and uneasiness" (p. 16).

**What does Macon's interaction with Mrs. Bains convey about his character?**

- Macon's refusal to give Mrs. Bains an extension on her rent payments, and his cruel suggestion that if she does not pay the rent her "babies" will have to "make it in the street" (p. 21) suggests that he cares primarily about making money and has no concern for others.

**How does Morrison's description of Macon's relationship with Pilate develop his character?**

- Student responses may include:
  - Morrison states that Pilate is "the one person in the world [Macon] hated more than his wife in spite of the fact that she was his sister" (p. 17). Macon believes that Pilate is "a regular source of embarrassment" (p. 20) because he is afraid of how she makes him look to "the white men in the bank" with whom he does business. Macon's feelings of embarrassment suggest that he hates his sister because he is afraid that her lack of "propriety" will rub off on him, and he will no longer be considered a respectable "propertied Negro" (p. 20). Macon's attempts to distance himself from Pilate despite the fact that as a child "she had been the dearest thing in the world to him" (p. 20) suggest that he is more concerned with social advancement and his own image than family loyalty.
  - Morrison's description of how Macon is drawn to the sight and sound of Pilate singing with her daughter and granddaughter complicates the initial depiction of Macon as a cold man who feels only hatred for his family. Despite the fact that Pilate is "the one person in the world [Macon] hated more than his wife" (p. 17), Macon responds to the sight of Pilate and her daughters with fixed attention and intense emotion. Macon "relished the effortless beauty of the women singing in the candlelight" (p. 29) and "felt himself softening under the weight of memory and music" (p. 30). Macon's emotional reaction to Pilate's singing suggests that despite his apparent dislike for her, he is still drawn to some aspects of her character.
- 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:

**How does the central idea of identity develop in this excerpt?**

Instruct student pairs to refer to pages 15-19 (from “Macon Dead never knew how it came about” to “with the same respect and awe she had treated the boy’s birth”) for evidence to support their responses as they discuss the following questions in groups before sharing out with the class.

Provide students with definitions of *begat*, *Magdalene*, *First Corinthians*, and *Pilate*.

- 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 *begat*, *Magdalene*, *First Corinthians*, and *Pilate* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the definitions of *summation*, *odiousness*, *onyx*, and *illiterate*.
  - Students write the definitions of *summation*, *odiousness*, *onyx*, and *illiterate* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

**Why does Macon guess that Milkman’s name is “not clean” (p. 15)?**

- Macon believes his wife had an inappropriate relationship with her father, and this leads him to assume that she has a similarly inappropriate relationship with her son. Therefore, Macon guesses that Milkman’s name is “not clean” because he assumes that the name is somehow related to what he imagines as a “filthy connection” between Ruth and her son (p. 17).

**How does Macon feel about his own name? Why does he feel this way?**

- Student responses may include:



- Macon's explanation that his family name was "done to them by somebody who couldn't have cared less" and therefore reflects the "perverseness or resignation" of his father (p. 18), suggests that Macon dislikes his name. Macon believes that this name is not his "real" family name (p. 17) because his father allowed himself to be named by someone else, suggesting that Macon is ashamed of his father and, by extension, his name.
- Since the name was forced upon them by a drunken soldier, Macon feels his name is not a "real" name given with "love and seriousness," but a cruel "joke" (p. 17) lacking any meaningful significance.
- Macon dislikes his name because it prevents him from knowing his own history. Macon insists that he must have had "some ancestor ... who had a name that was real" (p. 17), but "who this lithe young man was, and where his cane-stalk legs carried from or to, could never be known" (p. 18). As a result of the renaming that was "done to them" (p. 18), Macon has lost his connection to his ancestors.

**How does the story of Pilate's name further develop the significance of naming in Macon's family?**

- Student responses may include:
  - Unable to read, Macon's father picks Pilate's name by thumbing through the Bible and selecting "a group of letters that seemed to him strong and handsome" (p. 18). Despite the fact that the midwife protests because Pilate is the name of "the man that killed Jesus" (p. 19), Macon's father remains firm in his determination to name his daughter Pilate. This story suggests that for Macon's father, a name should be powerful or "strong" (p.18) and connected to an important tradition, like the Bible.
  - When she is twelve, Pilate takes the small scrap of paper on which her father writes her name, "put[s] it in a little brass box" (p. 19), and strings it through her ear like an earring. Pilate's impulse to carry her name with her at all times suggests that she sees her name as a treasure that must be protected, or an item that protects her.
- Consider explaining to students that the concept of naming is a *motif* in *Song of Solomon*. Provide students with the definition of a *motif* as "an image or concept that is repeated throughout a work of literature." Motifs may have symbolic meaning or contribute to the development of central ideas in a text.

**\*How does Macon's reflection on naming develop a central idea in the text?**

- Student responses should include:

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- Macon's hatred of his own name and his desire for a name that is "real" develops the central idea of identity. Macon's certainty that "Surely ... he ... had some ancestor ... who had a name that was real" suggests that for Macon, having a "real" name represents a connection to his ancestors. Macon hates his own name because he understands the renaming of his family by a drunken soldier as representative of his family's inability to define themselves on their own terms, like his ancestors once did. Therefore, Macon hates his name and wants a name that is "real" because he feels that he has been torn from a connection to the strong historical identity of his "ancestor[s]" (p. 17).
- The story of Pilate's naming develops the central idea of identity. Macon's reflection on how Pilate treats her name like a treasure by putting it into a "little brass box" (p. 19) and wearing it as an earring, emphasizes Macon's belief in the value and significance of a "real ... name given at birth with love and seriousness" (p. 17). This belief suggests that Macon sees a name as inherently connected to the person someone turns out to be and how people understand themselves.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

- **Differentiation Consideration:** To support students in identifying the development of central ideas and motifs throughout the text, consider providing the Central Ideas and Motifs Tracking Tool. If students struggle to identify central ideas and motifs, consider providing the following lists: central ideas: identity, love, community, freedom; motifs: naming, flight, storytelling, the supernatural.

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Instruct student pairs to refer to pages 19-30 (from "Macon Dead remembered when his son was born" to "Pilate swayed like a willow over her stirring") 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 *bootlegger* and *navel*.

- 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 *bootlegger* and *navel* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the definitions of *mortgage*, *chafe*, *ecstasy*, *charade*, and *willow*.
  - Students write the definitions of *mortgage*, *chafe*, *ecstasy*, *charade*, and *willow* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

**What does Macon's attitude toward Pilate suggest about his values?**

- Macon “hate[s]” (p. 17) Pilate and is ashamed of her. She is a “regular source of embarrassment” (p. 20) to Macon because of the “odd” way she dresses and acts, and he fears that her lack of “propriety” will take away his hard won gains as a respectable “propertied Negro” (p. 20). Macon's hatred and fear of Pilate suggest that he values wealth, success, and respectability above all else, even family.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle, consider posing the following scaffolding question:

**How does Macon's description of Pilate on page 20 clarify the meaning of the word *propriety* in this context? (L.11-12.4.a)**

- Macon's description of Pilate emphasizes the many ways in which she ignores social conventions, such as having a daughter out of wedlock, participating in illegal activity as a “raggedy bootlegger,” and dressing oddly. In light of this description, Macon's statement that Pilate “cut the last thread of propriety” means that Pilate is not correct or proper.

**What do Macon's interactions with Mrs. Bains and Mr. Porter further demonstrate about Macon's values?**

- Macon's willingness to evict Mrs. Bains even though she must take care of her “babies” (p. 21), coupled with his decision to demand rent from Mr. Porter at the very moment he threatens to commit suicide, suggests that Macon's obsession with material wealth leads him to exploit fellow African Americans for his own gain.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider posing the following extension question to deepen students' understanding:

**Why is Macon so focused on material wealth?**

- Macon is focused on material wealth because he sees being a “propertied Negro” (p. 20) as a pathway toward the authority and respect he has been denied as a poor, African-American man. As Morrison describes, “It was because of those keys that he could dare to walk over to that part of Not Doctor Street ... and approach the most important Negro in the city” (p. 22). Owning property gives Macon access to both a part of the city and the people in it to which he had previously been denied.

**Why is Macon drawn to Pilate's house? What does this visit to Pilate's house demonstrate about Macon's drive to become a “man of property” (p. 23)?**

- Student responses should include:
  - Macon is drawn to Pilate's house because he hears Pilate and her family singing together and "he wanted just a bit of music—from the person who had been his first caring for" (p. 28). Macon's desire to be close to the warmth, beauty, and intimacy of Pilate's house comes from the fact that Macon's own home does not contain these elements; Macon reflects "there was no music " in his house (p. 28).
  - Macon's desire to be close to the warmth and intimacy of Pilate's house suggests that his pursuit of material wealth and social status has cost him crucial connections with those in his family and the larger community. As Macon describes, his attitude toward others has resulted in a home in which "there was no music" (p. 28).
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider posing the following extension question to deepen students' understanding:

**What does Macon's description of Pilate's birth suggest about Pilate?**

- Student responses may include:
  - Macon's description of how Pilate's navel disappeared soon after her birth suggests that Pilate is somehow different from other people—as Macon describes "there was probably not another stomach like hers on earth" (p. 28).
  - Macon hints that Pilate's lack of a navel marks her as magical or mystical because she appears to have not "come into this world through normal channels" (p. 28).
  - Macon describes how Pilate pushed herself out of her dead mother when he describes how "the baby ... inched its way headfirst out of a still, silent, and indifferent cave of flesh" (p. 28). Macon's description of how Pilate defied the odds and essentially birthed herself conveys that she is both independent and strong.
- Students explore how the character of Pilate contributes to Morrison's motif of the supernatural in later lessons. At that point, it may be helpful for students to return to Morrison's initial description of Pilate and consider in greater depth how this description contributes to their understanding of the motif of the supernatural.

**\*How does Macon's relationship with Pilate develop a central idea in the text?**

- Student responses may include:

- Macon's relationship with Pilate develops the central idea of identity, because Macon's individualistic obsession with becoming a respectable "man of property" (p. 23) alienates him from his family and community. However, Macon's desire to be close to the warmth and intimacy of Pilate's house reflects his longing for a connection to family that he has lost in his pursuit to become a "man of property" (p. 23), thus revealing his identity conflict.
- Macon's relationship with Pilate develops the central idea of love, because Morrison emphasizes how Macon is conflicted by his past love for Pilate. Morrison describes how Pilate "at one time [] had been the dearest thing in the world to [Macon]" (p. 20) but in his strive for upward mobility she had become "the one person in the world [Macon] hated more than his wife" (p. 17). Morrison's description of Macon's attraction to Pilate's house and his continued need for "the person who had been his first caring for" (p. 28) suggests that he still feels some remnants of love for her.
- Students will explore the central idea of love in greater depth in future lessons.

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 a central idea over the course of pages 15-30?**

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%**

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Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to read and annotate 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.’”). Also, instruct students to develop 2-3 discussion questions focused on how Morrison develops characters during the family drive in the Packard (RL.11-12.3) and prepare possible answers to their questions for discussion.

- Students follow along.

## Homework

For homework, read and annotate 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.’”). 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.

## Central Ideas and Motifs Tracking Tool

<b>Name</b> :		<b>Class</b> :		<b>Date</b> :	
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**Directions:** Identify the central ideas and motifs that you encounter throughout the text. Trace the development of these ideas by noting how the author introduces, develops, or refines these ideas in the text. Cite textual evidence to support your work.

<b>Text:</b>	<i>Song of Solomon</i> by Toni Morrison
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Page #	Central Idea	Notes and Connections