

12 LC

Lesson 13

Introduction

In this lesson, students read and analyze pages 205-209 in *Song of Solomon* (from “What’s crazier? Her hauling a sack of gold” to “he neither answered nor turned his head at Milkman’s ‘See y’ later’”), in which Milkman discusses his arrest and Pilate’s sack of bones with his father. Students engage in a group discussion focusing on how Morrison’s choices develop the characters and events within the excerpt. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: How does Pilate’s interaction with the police further develop her character?

For homework, students read the article “The Trickster in African American Literature” by Trudier Harris and respond briefly in writing to the following prompt: How is Pilate similar to a trickster in pages 205-209? Additionally, students read and annotate pages 209-216 of *Song of Solomon*. Also, students develop 2-3 discussion questions focused on how the author develops story elements over the course of the excerpt 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)	
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>
L.11-12.4.a, b	<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> <p>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.</p> <p>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>).</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 does Pilate's interaction with the police further develop her character?

High Performance Response(s)

A High Performance Response should:

- Analyze how Pilate's interaction with the police develops her character (e.g., Pilate's interaction with the police demonstrates a new aspect of her character, namely her ability to manipulate others, even those who seem to have more power, such as white policemen. Pilate surprises Milkman by seeming to change physically during her interaction with the police. Milkman tells Macon, "She didn't even look the same. She looked short. Short and pitiful" (p. 205). He also describes how "her hands were shaking" (p. 206). These physical changes make Pilate seem weak, so the police will take pity on her and return her sack of bones. In addition to these physical changes, Pilate outwits the police by seeming to be religious. She quotes the Bible "apparently, verse and chapter" and explains that she wants to be able to "raise up to Judgment Day" with her husband (p. 207). By seeming religious, Pilate demonstrates that she understands what will make her appear most convincing to the police. Pilate's ability to outwit the police further develops her character as a strong, clever woman who knows how to manipulate even those who seem to have more power than she has.).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)

- asunder (adv.) - into separate parts; in or into pieces

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

- dignified (adj.) - serious and somewhat formal; having or showing dignity

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

- eclipse (v.) - to make (something) less important, popular, or visible
- desolate (adj.) - very sad and lonely, especially because someone you love has died or left
- verifying (v.) - proving, showing, finding out, or stating that (something) is true or correct
- of its own accord (adv. phrase) - happening by itself without anyone causing it to happen
- astonished (adj.) - feeling or showing great surprise or wonder
- shimmering (v.) - shining with a light that seems to move slightly
- staggering (v.) - moving or causing someone to move unsteadily from side to side

Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
Standards & Text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards: RL.11-12.3, W.11-12.9.a, L.11-12.4.a, b • Text: <i>Song of Solomon</i> by Toni Morrison, pages 205-209 	
Learning Sequence: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda 2. Homework Accountability 3. Reading and Discussion 4. Quick Write 5. Closing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 5% 2. 15% 3. 60% 4. 15% 5. 5%

Materials

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- Student copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist (refer to 12 LC Lesson 1) (optional)
- Copies of “The Trickster in African American Literature” by Trudier Harris for each student
- To locate “The Trickster in African American Literature” by Trudier Harris, go to <http://www.nexuslearning.net/> and use search terms: trickster, African American literature.

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.
	Bold text indicates questions for the teacher to ask students.
	<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 continue to read *Song of Solomon* by Toni Morrison, pages 205-209, paying particular attention to how the author further develops Pilate’s character over the course of the excerpt.

- 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 187-209 of *Song of Solomon* and annotate for character

development. Also, develop 2-3 discussion questions focused on character development and prepare possible answers to the questions for discussion.)

Instruct students to form pairs and talk about questions they developed for homework, specifically analyzing how Morrison develops characters in this excerpt (RL.11-12.3).

- Student questions may include:

How is Michael-Mary Graham a foil for Corinthians?

- Ms. Graham and Corinthians are both single, educated women who speak French but their status in life is significantly different. Ms. Graham is pleased to be able to “give a maid a copy of *Walden*” (p. 190), and that her educated maid is a novelty or pet that she enjoys showing off to friends. Corinthians experiences “a work world in which colored girls, regardless of their background, were in demand for one and only one kind of work” (p. 189), suggesting that despite her education, Corinthians can only work as a maid because of her race. As a foil for Corinthians, Ms. Graham demonstrates the injustice of Corinthians’s life circumstances.

Why does Corinthians throw herself on the car to stop Porter from driving away? How does this action develop her character?

- Corinthians feels that Porter is the only person who can protect her from a “smothering death of dry roses” (p. 199). Her relationship with Porter is an avenue of escape from her family and her dull life. Corinthians says that she would “bang forever to escape the velvet” (p. 198), implying that escaping with Porter is essential to her survival.

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*.)

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.

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- 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 pairs. Post or project each set of questions below for students to discuss. Instruct students to continue to annotate the text as they read and discuss (W.11-12.9.a).

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

Why is Milkman surprised by how Pilate acts with the police?

Instruct student pairs to read pages 205-207 (from “What’s crazier? Her hauling a sack of gold” to “the open window seem refreshing by comparison”) for evidence to support their responses as they discuss the following questions before sharing out with the class.

Provide students with the definition of *asunder*.

- 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 *asunder* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the definitions of *eclipse*, *desolate*, *verifying*, *of its own accord*, *astonished*, and *shimmering*.
 - Students write the definitions of *eclipse*, *desolate*, *verifying*, *of its own accord*, *astonished*, and *shimmering* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

***How does Pilate change during her interaction with the police?**

- Milkman describes several ways in which Pilate’s physical appearance and attitude change. He explains that she “even changed her voice,” that she looked “short and pitiful” (p. 205), and that “even her eyes” seemed small (p. 207). In addition to these physical changes, Pilate pretends to be religious by quoting the Bible “verse and chapter” and explaining that she wants her husband’s bones so they can “raise up to Judgment Day together” (p. 207). Pilate changes both her physical appearance and her attitudes during her interaction with the police.

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

How does Pilate’s explanation that “she always called him Mr. Solomon cause he was such a dignified colored man” (p. 207) clarify the meaning of the word *dignified*? (L. 11-12.4.a) How do the word parts in *dignified* confirm this meaning? (L. 11-12.4.b)

- Pilate explains that she always referred to her “husband” as “Mr. Solomon” because he was a “dignified colored man” (p. 207), suggesting that he was such an honorable and serious man that she called her own husband “Mr.” The word part “dignity” means seriousness or honor, and confirms that the meaning of *dignified* means “serious or honorable.”

***According to Milkman, why did Pilate change?**

- Milkman suggests that Pilate put on an act for the police officers. Milkman explains that “she came in there like Louise Beaver and Butterfly McQueen” (p. 205), comparing her to two prominent black actresses who played roles that reinforced racist stereotypes. Thus, according to Milkman, Pilate acts weak in order to disarm the police, get her bones back, and get Guitar and Milkman out of jail.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** If students are unfamiliar with Louise Beavers or Butterfly McQueen, consider providing a brief clip of their performances or allowing students to complete a short Internet search. If these resources are unavailable, consider posing the following question to students in order to aid their understanding through context:

Based on Milkman’s description of Pilate, what are Louise Beaver and Butterfly McQueen like?

- Milkman says that Pilate came in “like Louise Beaver and Butterfly McQueen all rolled up in one” (p. 205), which implies that the way in which Pilate was acting was similar to how Louise Beavers and Butterfly McQueen act. Milkman imitates Pilate’s manner by saying “yassuh, boss” (p. 205), suggesting that Pilate acts as if she is subservient or like a servant to white people. Therefore, Louise Beavers and Butterfly McQueen must be women who act subservient to white people.

How do Pilate’s actions in the police station alter Milkman’s perception of her?

- Student responses may include:
 - Milkman is distressed by Pilate’s actions at the police station. The longer Milkman sits in the kitchen remembering the events “the more desolate he became” (p. 206), implying that Milkman is upset by the experience. Milkman is unsure of what events truly happened at the police station, thinking that “perhaps he made them

up” (p. 206). This uncertainty about the events demonstrates that Milkman is now uncertain about Pilate. Milkman begins to question Pilate and her judgments, deciding that carrying around the bones negatively affects Pilate’s mind “for good” (p. 208).

- Milkman is surprised and impressed by Pilate’s actions at the police station. Milkman is surprised that Pilate arrives at the station and confirms their “lie that they had ripped off the sack as a joke on an old lady” (p. 206). Milkman is impressed by how Pilate is able to fool the police by changing her appearance into a “short and pitiful” (p. 205) woman who can quote the Bible “verse and chapter” (p. 207). Milkman is so “astonished” (p. 207) by Pilate’s transformation that he is not “sure these details had really happened” (p. 206).

How do Pilate’s actions in the police station further develop a central idea in the text?

- Student responses may include:
 - Pilate’s actions relate to the central idea of freedom by showing the way in which society forces African Americans to act in the face of white authority figures like policemen. Milkman describes how Pilate “whined to the policeman,” how “she had to look up at him” (p. 206), and how she “pleaded” (p. 207) with him. Pilate’s use of servant-like language and mannerisms demonstrates how some African Americans act in the face of white authority, thus showing a lack of freedom.
 - The encounter in the police station explores the central idea of identity by showing that Pilate changes her identity to manipulate the police. Earlier descriptions of Pilate establish her as a powerful woman but in the police station, Milkman describes her as “short and pitiful” (p. 205) and her hands “shaking” (p. 206) as she tells her fake story. Pilate changes her identity from a powerful woman to a weak one in order to convince the police she is someone they should help.

How does Pilate explain why she possesses the bones? How does she appeal to the police for their return?

- Pilate claims that the bones are of her long dead husband, “Mr. Solomon” (p. 207), who was lynched. Pilate explains that she could not afford to pay the “funeral peoples” but wanted to keep his bones near so she and her husband could rise “up to Judgment Day together” (p. 207). She makes herself seem poor and religious in order to convince the police officers that she is someone they should help by giving her back the bones.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing the following extension question to deepen students’ understanding:

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The actual Bible verse in Matthew 21:2 is “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me.” How does this verse apply to the situation at the police station? What does Pilate’s use of this verse suggest about her character?

- Student responses should include:
 - This verse applies to the situation on p. 207, because Milkman and Guitar are like “a donkey” and “a colt” tied up together by the police, and Pilate has come to untie or free them. Guitar and Milkman had to “depend on Pilate to get [them] out of jail” (p. 204) as they were “handcuffed on a wooden bench” (p. 206). Milkman and Guitar’s situation is similar to the animals in the Bible verse.
 - Pilate’s use of this verse suggests that she knows the Bible quite well and uses it not only to trick the police, but to insult Milkman and Guitar. Pilate tells the police that the verse in Matthew 21.2 is “so e’er the Lord hath brought together, let no man put asunder” (p. 207), which supports her argument that they should give her the bones, so her husband can stay with her. The actual verse in Matthew 21.2 suggests that Guitar and Milkman are like a stupid donkey and her colt for “run[ning] off with her husband’s bones” (p. 206) and getting caught by the police. Through this reversal, Pilate outsmarts the police and insults her nephew and his friend for their foolish actions.

***How does Guitar react to Pilate’s intervention? What does Guitar’s reaction suggest about him?**

- Milkman says that Guitar radiates anger, that his “anger was like heat shimmering out of his skin” (p. 207). Milkman remembers Guitar sitting in the police station with “eyes of a dead man” (p. 207). These reactions convey that either the experience of being arrested or Pilate’s actions at the police station anger Guitar.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Instruct student pairs to read pages 207-209 (from “And again there was a change. Pilate was tall again” to “he neither answered nor turned his head at Milkman’s ‘See y’ later’”) for evidence to support their responses as they discuss the following questions before sharing out with the class.

- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the definition of *staggering*.

- Students write the definition of *staggering* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

***How does Pilate act differently once she is in the car? What does this difference suggest about Pilate?**

- Milkman explains that “Pilate was tall again” once she was back in the car and that her “own voice was back” (p. 207). Pilate speaks “to Macon only” and she speaks “like somebody picking up a story that had been interrupted in the telling” (p. 207). Pilate’s behavior suggests that she is confident and comfortable interacting with her brother in spite of his negative opinion of her, and that she only acted submissively in order to get her bones back and free Milkman and Guitar.

What does Pilate’s version of the story “looking for the cave” (p. 208) indicate about her beliefs?

- Student responses should include:
 - Pilate’s version of going back to “the cave” to find the dead man’s bones demonstrates her acceptance of the responsibility she feels has been placed on her by her father’s ghost. Pilate says that she “went cause Papa told [her] to” and that “a human life is precious” (p. 208), which indicates respecting both the living and the dead is important to Pilate.
 - The message from her father’s ghost that she “can’t fly on off and leave a body” (p. 208) drives Pilate to return and recover the bones of the man from the cave. Pilate interprets her father’s words to mean that “a human life is precious” (p. 208) and that people cannot run away from their responsibilities to others. Pilate believes that “she had to go back for” the bones (p. 208) because the responsibility for the death of the man in the cave rests on her and Macon.

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 Pilate’s interaction with the police 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.

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- 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 the article “The Trickster in African American Literature” by Trudier Harris and respond briefly in writing to the following prompt:

How is Pilate similar to a trickster in pages 205-209?

Additionally, instruct students to read and annotate pages 209-216 of *Song of Solomon* (from “Milkman woke at noon. Somebody had come into his room” to “Why not take it? He closed the door”). Also, instruct students to develop 2-3 discussion questions focused on how the author develops story elements over the course of the excerpt (RL.11-12.3), and prepare possible answers to their questions for discussion.

- Students follow along.

Homework

Read the article “The Trickster in African American Literature” by Trudier Harris and respond briefly in writing to the following prompt:

How is Pilate similar to a trickster in pages 205-209?

Additionally, read and annotate pages 209-216 of *Song of Solomon* (from “Milkman woke at noon. Somebody had come into his room” to “Why not take it? He closed the door”). Also, develop 2-3 discussion questions focused on how the author develops story elements over the course of the excerpt, and prepare possible answers to your questions for discussion.