



Close reading plan

“Thank You, Ma’am” by Langston Hughes

Created by Natasha Domina, 2014 Connecticut Dream Team teacher

What makes this text complex?			
Text and Author	"Thank You, Ma'am" by Langston Hughes	Where to Access Text	http://photos.state.gov/libraries/hochiminh/646441/vantt/Thank%20You_%20Ma_am.pdf
Text Description			
This is a short story that seems very simple on the surface; a boy tries to steal a purse but the owner grabs hold of him and brings him home for some mothering. She feeds him and gives him money before turning him out, never to see him again. The story is compelling to students because of the woman's unexpected response to the attempted theft. It becomes more compelling with close reading because the details of this sparse story reveal many hints about the characters, their motivations, and more complex themes than students will notice on the first reading.			
Quantitative			
Lexile and Grade Level	920—5 th grade	Text Length	1341 words
Qualitative			
Meaning/Central Ideas		Text Structure/Organization	
Students will be able to quickly develop an initial idea about the meaning of this text and its theme. Multiple readings and discussions about the text reveal multiple levels of meaning that may be difficult to identify. There are also themes that are ambiguous and revealed over the entirety of the text.		No graphics. The organization is clear and chronological. Characters are complex. The point of view is intricate because the story is told from neither character's point of view; students need to analyze characters' words and actions in order to infer the characters' thinking and motivation.	
Prior Knowledge Demands		Language Features	
Explores themes of varying levels of complexity. Experiences portrayed (that of people in a poorer neighborhood without many advantages) may or may not be uncommon to readers. No references to other texts.		Sentences mainly have a simple structure. Some archaic words and figurative language. Language is largely explicit and easy to understand, but investigating the author's sparse choices reveals more complex meanings.	
Vocabulary			
Tier Two Words (General academic vocabulary)		Tier Three Words (Domain-specific words)	
<i>"Words that are far more likely to appear in written texts than in speech. [They] often represent subtle or precise ways to say relatively simple things—saunter instead of walk, for example." (CCSS ELA Appendix A)</i>		<i>"[Tier Three words]...are specific to a domain or field of study (lava, carburetor, legislature, circumference, aorta) and key to understanding a new concept within a text." (CCSS ELA Appendix A)</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slung • Pocketbook • Latching • Stoop • Frail • Barren • Blue-jeaned sitter • You a lie • Icebox 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half-nelson • Blue suede shoes • Day-bed • I didn't aim to • I got a great mind to • Roomers • Kitchenette • Gas plate 	
		No Tier Three words in this text.	

Potential Reader/Task Challenges

The story is age-appropriate for 6th graders (could also be appropriate for 5th grade through adulthood), and the surprising behavior of the characters is engaging to students. Students will need to be able to step outside of their own experiences and expectations of how people interact in order to understand the relationship between the woman and the boy. There are also references to aspects of living in the mid-20th century that students may not understand. Students used to developing one idea about characters and the text may find this task challenging since they will need to recognize that characters and the meanings of what they say and do change over the course of the story.

Text-dependent questions		
Question	Standard alignment	Page of this document
How does the woman’s history affect the way she chooses to handle the boy trying to steal her purse?	<i>RL6.1</i>	5
The woman calls the boy different things throughout the text: “boy”, “Roger,” “son”. How does her changing word choice reflect her changing attitude toward the boy?	<i>RL6.4</i>	8
What the boy says and does midway through the story shifts. What do his changes in speech and action reflect about changes in his feelings?	<i>RL6.3</i>	11
How does the change in the meaning of the phrase, “When I get through with you, sir, you are going to remember Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones,” relate to the story’s theme of how people can change?	<i>RL6.5</i>	16
How does the part where the woman gives the boy money to buy shoes contribute to the development of the theme of people’s ability to change?	<i>RL6.2</i>	19
Target Standards		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>RL6.1</i> Cite textual evidence to support inferences drawn from the text. • <i>RL6.2</i> Determine how a theme is conveyed through particular details. • <i>RL6.3</i> Describe how the characters change as the plot moves toward a resolution. • <i>RL6.4</i> Analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning. • <i>RL6.5</i> Analyze how a particular sentence fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme. 		

Question 1

Question #1	How does the woman’s history affect the way she chooses to handle the boy trying to steal her purse?	
Standard(s) covered:	<i>RL.6.1</i> Cite textual evidence to support inferences drawn from the text.	
	Example response that meets standard	Look-fors
	<p>The woman says that when she was young she “wanted things that I could not get.” It seems like she probably stole because she says, “I have done things, too, which I would not tell you, son— neither tell God, if he didn’t already know.” She probably kicks the boy, instead of running away or calling the police because she had a tough early life, where she may have even been in fights, and that made her comfortable with defending herself. Later in the text, the woman’s history makes her more sympathetic toward the boy. Because she knows how the boy probably feels, she is kinder to him than most people would be. Instead of calling the police, she decides to take him to her home to clean him up and feed him. At the end of the story she gives him money for the shoes he wanted. It seems as though the woman remembers how she felt when she was that age and treats the boy the way she would have liked people to have treated her. Another example of this is when the woman and the boy are eating dinner. The text says, “The woman did not ask the boy anything about where he lived, or his folks, or anything else that would embarrass him.” This suggests that she can relate to how the boy is feeling and that she wants to treat him in a way that respects his feelings. Because the woman’s history is similar to the boy’s experience, she treats him like a son she cares about instead of a thief she’s angry at.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentions that the woman had a hard younger life and/or that she probably stole when she was young. • Connects the woman’s kindness towards the boy with her earlier life.
If students are struggling to answer the text-dependent question, use this follow-up plan for modeling and practice:		
Objective	In this lesson you will learn how to infer a character’s motivation by asking how her history would cause her to act in this way.	
Prior knowledge to review	Inference— combining information in the text with information you know from life to figure out information the author hinted at but did not directly write. (RL.4.2)	
Steps to achieve objective	Think aloud for direct instruction	

<p>1) Reread the text, looking for places where the character acts differently.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Okay, so I'm going to reread the text, looking for places where the character acts in a way that is different from how most people would act. "She was a large woman with a large purse that had everything in it but hammer and nails." Hmm. That is sort of an unusual description, but I know people who have a lot in their purses. I wouldn't say there's anything here that the woman does that is different from how most people would act. I'm going to keep on reading. • Oh! Here it says, "the large woman simply turned around and kicked him right square in his blue-jeaned sitter." Wow. That definitely seems unusual. If this happened to most people, where someone tried to steal our purse, we wouldn't be kicking him. Most people would grab the purse and run away as fast as we could. Or whip out a phone and call the police. The woman is definitely acting differently from how most people would act here. • I'm going to highlight this part to mark that it shows a place where the character acts differently.
<p>2) Ask, "What do I know about the character's history?"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Okay. So now I need to ask myself, "What do I know about the character's history that might connect to this unusual behavior?" Hmm. I'd better think over everything I know about the woman from the whole story. • Well, later in the story the woman says that when she was young she wanted things she could not get and she did things that she doesn't want to tell the boy. It seems like maybe she did some stealing when she was younger. Could that connect to her unusual behavior? • I think it might. I'm going to go on to the next step and try it out.
<p>3) Ask, "How does this part of the character's history explain the character's behavior?"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So now I'm going to ask, "How does this part of the character's history explain the character's behavior?" • Well, if she stole and did bad things when she was younger, it sounds like she might have had a tough life. Maybe she even got into fights when she was younger. It makes sense that she would have some experience with defending herself. • I think I'm ready to start answering the question: the woman probably kicks the boy, instead of running away or calling the police because she had a tough early life, where she may have even been in fights, and that made her comfortable with defending herself. • Now I'll look for other places where the woman acts in ways different from how most people would act so I can add more to my answer.

<p>Extension and practice</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If students are having difficulty identifying places where a character acts in an unusual way, have them fold a piece of paper in half the long way. On one side, have them list actions a character does in the story. On the other side of the paper, across from each action the character did, have the students write what they would do in that situation. Have students share their lists with with a partner or in small groups. If most students write that they would do the same action as the character, the character's action is probably normal. If most students wrote that they would act differently, what the character did was probably unusual. • If students are having difficulty connecting a character's history to her actions, have them work in partners or groups to list what they know about the character's history. Have them put a star next to the part of the character's history that seems most different from other people's lives. Then, have them brainstorm all the ways that part of her history could possibly relate to the action in the story students are trying to explain. 	

What next?

For additional practice, with students or for students' independent work, apply this learning objective and set of steps to other fiction texts to teach inferring a character's motivation from her/his history. (RL.6.1)

See more examples of how to teach inferring about a character. (RL.6.1)

Objective: In this lesson you will learn how to infer a character's motivation by asking how her/his history would cause her/him to act in this way.

1. Reread the text, looking for places where the character acts in a way that is different from how most people would act.
2. Ask, "What do I know about the character's history that might connect to the character's unusual choice?"
3. Ask, "How does this part of the character's history explain the character's decision?"

[Analyze a character's actions](#)

[Explain how setting shapes a character](#)

[Determine how setting shapes a character](#)

Question 2

Question #2	The woman calls the boy different things throughout the text: “boy”, “Roger,” “son”. How does her changing word choice reflect her changing attitude toward the boy?	
Standard(s) covered:	RL6.4 Analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning.	
Example response that meets standard		Look-fors
<p>In the beginning, the woman calls him “boy”. This shows that she doesn’t care very much about him and doesn’t think he deserves much respect. She starts using the boy’s name when she brings him into her house. (“Then, Roger, you go to that sink and wash your face.”) Using his name shows that she expects to spend some time with him and is interested in getting to know him. Then she switches to calling him “son”. She does this while she is acting motherly toward him. She has made him wash his face and comb his hair. She says “Eat some more, son.” It seems like she really cares about him and wants him to feel loved and taken care of. At the very end of the story she switches back to calling him “boy”. (“Good-night! Behave yourself, boy!”) She probably does this to mark that she’s not going to see him again.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connects the term “boy” with being disconnected with him (not caring about him/not respecting him/not seeing him as someone she is going to have a long relationship with). • Connects the term “son” with acting motherly toward him. • Provides examples from the text of what the woman does to show how she is feeling about the boy.
If students are struggling to answer the text-dependent question, use this follow-up plan for modeling and practice:		
Objective	In this lesson you will learn how to analyze the impact of a specific word choice by connecting the word to a character’s feelings.	
Prior knowledge to review	Using precise vocabulary to describe characters’ feelings (RL3.3, W5.3.d)	
Steps to achieve objective	Think aloud for direct instruction	

<p>1) Reread the text to determine the context of the word.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I need to reread the story and see what is going on before and after the woman uses those words for the boy. I think first I'll skim through the story and highlight where the woman calls the boy "boy," "Roger," and "son" so I can find them easily. • MODEL SKIMMING THE STORY AND HIGHLIGHTING THESE WORDS. • Okay, now those terms are easy to find. The next step is to see what is going on before and after the woman uses each term. • So I'm going to skim through and look for all the places the woman calls him "boy"....Hmm. She uses it in the very beginning, when she says, "Pick up my pocketbook, boy, and give it here." And then she doesn't say "boy" again until the very end, when she says, "Good night! Behave yourself, boy!" • Now I'm going to read a little bit before and a little after these lines to remind myself what's going on in the story... • Well, the first time is just after the boy tried to steal the woman's purse. The woman kicked him and grabbed onto him and wouldn't let go. • The second time is just after the woman said he needed to leave so she could go to sleep, and just before she closes the door on him.
<p>2) Ask, "What is the character feeling here?"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now I need to try to figure out how the woman is feeling about the boy. I'm going to start by thinking about how I would be feeling if I were in her situation, but the beginning and ending seem like different situations. I'm going to start by thinking about the beginning first. • So, the boy just tried to steal her purse. If someone just tried to steal my purse I would be really mad. • Hmm. Mad isn't such a specific word. I think I need to push myself to be more precise. I can't just think about <i>my</i> feelings. I'm going to need to think about the woman's situation to try to figure out more precise words for how she is probably feeling about the boy. • Well, the woman seems capable of defending herself, and the boy didn't do a very good job of trying to steal her purse. It seems like she's angry but she also feels in control of the situation, since she's ordering the boy around. It's like she's dealing with a kid who was misbehaving.
<p>3) Connect the character's feelings to the word.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hmm. I need to think about how the word "boy" connects to how the woman is feeling. How could the word "boy" show that she's angry but in charge and that she's dealing with a kid? • Well, the boy is really a teenager, but she calls him "boy" like he's young. • She also doesn't bother to ask him his name. • So, when she calls him "boy," it's like she doesn't care very much about him, and she's treating him like someone that isn't worthy of much respect. • Okay. So I've figured out what the woman's attitude is when she calls the boy "boy". Now I need to go back through all three steps to figure out what the woman's attitude is when she calls him "Roger" and when she calls him "son". • MODEL GOING THROUGH THE STEPS FOR "BOY" AT THE END OF THE STORY, "ROGER" AND "SON".

Extension and practice

- If students are having trouble understanding how a character’s feelings might connect to a word have students act out skits where the emotion changes but the scene itself does not. For instance, a mom might call a kid to dinner as she is excited about sharing some good news, and then call the kid to dinner when she is very angry at the kid. Have the class notice the different word choices the actor playing the mother makes even though in both cases she is doing the same action.

What next?

For additional practice, with students or for students' independent work, apply this learning objective and set of steps to other fiction texts to analyze a specific word choice through examining a character’s feelings.
(RL.6.4)

See more examples of how to teach analyzing the impact of word choice.
(RL.6.4)

Objective: In this lesson you will learn how to analyze the impact of a specific word choice by connecting the word to a character’s feelings.

1. Reread the text to determine the context of the word.
2. Ask, “What is the character feeling here?”
3. Connect the character’s feelings to the word.

[Determine the mood of a poem by analyzing word choice and meaning](#)

[Determine the impact of words on tone](#)

[Analyze a key word or phrase to interpret the story](#)

Question 3

Question #3	What the boy says and does shifts midway through the story. What do his changes in speech and action reflect about changes in his feelings?
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Standard(s) covered:	RL6.3 Describe how the characters change as the plot moves toward a resolution.
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Example response that meets standard	Look-fors
In the beginning of the story, when the boy first gets caught, he barely talks and doesn't do much. He mostly just says "yes'm" and "no'm". He acts like a criminal. He also seems really scared, like he expects people to be mean to him. By the end, he starts talking more. He uses whole sentences instead of just one word answers, such as when he asks, "Do you need somebody to go to the store...maybe to get some milk or something?" He seems like he is starting to relax around the woman and care about her. The boy's behaviors make it seem like he's turning into a more polite, responsible person.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurately mentions changes in how the boy talks (says more than in the beginning) and in how the boy acts (sits where the woman can see him). • Connects the changes with a change in the boy's feelings (trusts the woman, wants to be well-behaved). • Includes evidence from the text to support the changes.

If students are struggling to answer the text-dependent question, use this follow-up plan for modeling and practice:

Objective	In this lesson you will learn how to describe how a character changes by examining changes in speech and behavior.
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Prior knowledge to review	Characters tend to change over the course of a story. Quotation marks signal what a character says. (L4.2.b)
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Steps to achieve objective	Think aloud for direct instruction
1) Reread the story, noting what the character says and does.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I need to reread this story and keep track of what the boy says and does throughout the story, but I'm going to need to keep track of this information. I think I need a table so I can keep track of what he was saying and doing in the beginning of the story and what he was saying and doing later in the story. <i>(see table template and example at end of this lesson)</i> • I'll make a column for earlier in the story and a column for later in the story. • Okay, so now I'm going to reread the story and look for what the boy says and does. Hmm. The first thing he does is grab the woman's purse. I'm going to write that action in the EARLIER column, where it says "What the character does". • Oh—here is something the boy says in quotation marks. That's easy. I can copy the words he says right into the part of the table for "What the character says". • CONTINUE FILLING IN CHART FOR WHAT THE CHARACTER SAYS AND DOES EARLY ON IN THE STORY. • Now I need to flip to the end to see what the boy says and does later in the story. I think I'll start from the top of the last page. Hmm. What does the boy do here? • Well, the first action he does on this page is he sits where the woman can see him. Let me add that to the chart. I have to make sure I remember to put that in the column for LATER. • CONTINUE FILLING IN CHART FOR WHAT THE CHARACTER SAYS AND DOES LATER IN THE STORY.
2) Ask, "What kind of person says and does that?"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Okay. So now I've got the chart filled out. Now I need to look over the column for early on in the story and ask, "What kind of person says and does that?" • Well, definitely a criminal would grab someone else's purse. But I need to think about everything on the list, not just that one action. I'll write down "criminal" underneath the EARLIER column so I don't forget, but I'm going to think about the rest of what the boy says and does. • Hmm. He says, "Yes'm" and "No'm" a lot. And he doesn't do very much after he grabs the purse—he just picks it up when the woman makes him. What kind of person would say and do <i>those</i> kinds of things? • It seem like he's pretty scared. It seems like he expects that the woman is going to be mean to him. He didn't give her an attitude or try to talk his way out of the situation. I wonder if he's the kind of person who doesn't have much self-confidence. • Whoa. I just said a bunch of ideas about the kind of person the boy might be. I'll add those to the table, too. • Now I'd better look at the column for the ending. • FILL IN CHART FOR WHAT KIND OF PERSON SAYS AND DOES WHAT THE BOY SAYS/DOES LATER IN THE STORY.
3) Explain the difference in the character from the beginning to the end.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So the third step is to explain the difference in the boy from the beginning to the end....I should look at the bottom of my table, where I wrote the kind of person the boy was early in the story and later in the story so I can think about the differences. • Hmm. I wrote that early on the boy was acting like a criminal and like he didn't have much self-confidence. He was scared and expected people to be mean to him. So what did I write for later on that would show a difference? • Well, I wrote that he was acting responsible and polite. That is a big difference from behaving like a criminal. • He also went from expecting people to be mean to him to caring about the woman, and acting more relaxed around her. • Okay. So now I need to explain that difference by talking about the boy's speech and actions. • In the beginning of the story, the boy was acting like a criminal and also really scared. He tried to steal the woman's purse and he hardly said anything to her: he just said "yes'm" or "no'm". By the end he is acting more relaxed and responsible. He talks more to the woman, such as when he says, "Do you need somebody to go to the store...maybe to get some milk or something?" He also sits where the woman can see him so she knows he's not going to steal her purse.

Extension and practice

- If students are having trouble using a character’s speech and actions to determine what kind of person the character is have the class brainstorm a list of words that could describe the kind of person someone is. Have individuals or pairs choose a word from the list and then write, draw a cartoon, or act out an example of what a person who fits that word would say and do. Alternately, pairs, small groups, or the class could brainstorm examples of individuals they know who fit one of the describing words and then share examples of what that person has said and done that fit the description.
- If students are having trouble explaining the difference in the character from early on in the story to later in the story, give them this sentence frame to use: In the beginning, the character used to be ____, but in the end s/he isn’t. Instead, s/he is _____. Practice using this sentence frame with the woman from the story, with a character from another story, or with examples of how students have changed since they were young.

What next?

For additional practice, with students or for students’ independent work, apply this learning objective and set of steps to other fiction texts to teach using speech and behavior to identify changes in a character. (RL6.3)

See more examples of how to teach about analyzing characters. (RL6.3)

Objective: In this lesson you will learn how to describe how a character changes by examining changes in speech and behavior.

1. Reread the story, noting what the character says and does.
2. Ask, “What kind of person says and does that?”
3. Explain the difference in the character from the beginning to the end.

[Tracking how a character changes](#)

[Infer and cite evidence of character traits](#)

[Analyze a character’s actions](#)

[Grow ideas about character traits](#)

[Analyze a character’s thoughts, actions and words](#)

[Describe a character’s personality using details from the text](#)

Table Template:

	EARLIER	LATER
What the character SAYS		
What the character DOES		
What KIND OF PERSON talks and acts in these ways?		

Table Example:

	EARLIER	LATER
What the character SAYS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes'm • I didn't aim to • Yes'm • I'm very sorry, lady, I'm sorry • No'm • No'm, I just want you to turn me loose • No'm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you need somebody to go to the store, maybe to get some milk or something? • That will be fine. • Thank you
What the character DOES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grabs the woman's purse • Picks up the woman's purse (when she tells him to) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sits where the woman can see him • Eats dinner • Takes the money the woman gives him • Walks down the hall with the woman • Turns and looks at the woman
What KIND OF PERSON talks and acts in these ways?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criminal • Doesn't want to interact with other people • Scared • Expects people to be mean to him • Low self-confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polite • Responsible • Caring

Question 4

Question #4	How does the change in the meaning of the phrase, “When I get through with you, sir, you are going to remember Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones,” relate to the story’s theme of how people can change?
Standard(s) covered:	RL6.5 --Analyze how a particular sentence fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme.

Example response that meets standard	Look-fors
<p>In the beginning of the story the phrase seems to mean that the boy isn’t going to forget the woman because she was so rough with him. The woman put him in a half-nelson and dragged him down the street. At the end of the story the phrase seems to mean that the boy is always going to remember the woman because of how kind she was to him. She fed the boy dinner and gave him \$10 to buy the shoes he wanted. This is like how the woman changed from being a rough teenager who did things she wasn’t proud of to being a kind and generous adult. The boy changed too. He started off trying to steal to get what he wanted. Later, he didn’t steal the purse when he had the chance. The boy became more trustworthy after the woman took him to her home. He might remember her for helping him change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurately identifies a contrast between the beginning and end of the story: in the beginning of the story the phrase sounded like it was about the woman treating the boy badly, whereas in the end the phrase was a reflection of how the woman had affected the boy in a positive way. • Supports the answer with specific phrases from the text that illustrate the negative view of the woman in the beginning and the positive view of the woman in the end. • Connects the change in the meaning of the phrase to the changes in the characters.

If students are struggling to answer the text-dependent question, use this follow-up plan for modeling and practice:

Objective	In this lesson you will learn how to analyze how a particular sentence contributes to the development of a theme by examining the change in its meaning.
Prior knowledge to review	Theme—reflects the author’s message to the reader (RL4.2)
Steps to achieve objective	Think aloud for direct instruction
1) Reread the text around the sentence to determine the sentence’s meaning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So I want to reread a little before the sentence and a little after the sentence to see what the sentence means here. • First I need to skim the story to find the sentence • Here it is! So what’s happening before the sentence? ... The boy says he just wants the woman to turn him loose and she doesn’t. • Then, just after the sentence she puts him in a half-nelson and drags him up the street to her home. • So now I need to try to figure out what the woman could have meant by saying, “When I get through with you, sir, you are going to remember Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones.” • The woman was being pretty rough with him. It sounds like she’s saying the boy is going to remember a punishment she gives him.

<p>2) Reread the end of the story, looking for events that might connect with the sentence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now I need to ask, “What events from the end might connect with the sentence?” I especially want to look for events that might show a different meaning to the sentence. • Well, before, I found events that showed the boy is going to remember how rough the woman is. Since I’m especially looking for events that show a different meaning I’m going to look for events that might give a different reason for the boy remembering the woman. • Okay. So I want to look at the endhere I see the part where the woman gives the boy \$10 to buy the shoes he wanted. That definitely sounds like something the boy would remember about the woman. That also is different from the woman being mean to him.
<p>3) Ask, “How did the meaning of the sentence change?”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So how did the meaning of the sentence change from the beginning to the end of the story? • Well, at the end the boy isn’t going to remember the woman for being rough and punishing him. Instead, the woman was really generous and nice to him. I’ll bet he will remember her for being so kind to him. • It also seems like the woman wants the boy not to steal anymore. He will probably remember her for having a positive influence on him. • So the meaning of the sentence changed from being about how the woman was rough on the boy to being about how she was so kind and how she had a good impact on his life.
<p>4) Ask, “How does this change in meaning connect to the theme?”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well, if the theme is that people can change, I need to think about how the characters changed, and how that connects to the meaning of the sentence. • So how did the characters change? Well, how the woman treats the boy definitely changes. At first it seems like she was going to give him a rough punishment and then she was really generous to him. • Okay. That’s a start. I’m going to keep thinking about what else I know about how the characters changed. • I know when the woman was young she did some bad things but now she’s generous. Hmm. How can that connect to the sentence? • Well, what I said sounds kind of like what I said about the meaning of the sentence; she used to be rough but now she’s generous. • I should think about how the boy changed, too. How could that connect to the meaning of the sentence? • MODEL FOR THE CHANGE IN THE BOY.

Extension and practice

- If students are having difficulty finding events that might connect with the sentence, have pairs, groups or the class brainstorm reasons why they remember someone and then reread the text, looking for what the woman does that fit with the reasons students brainstormed.
- If students are having difficulty figuring out what the sentence could mean, based on the events of the story, explain to students that people tend to remember other people for the way they make us feel. Have students reread the text, either in groups, pairs, or individually, and put in emoticons to show how the boy felt in response to the woman throughout the story. Then, have pairs or groups discuss what emotions the woman brought up in the boy and which emotions would be most memorable for the boy.
- If students are having difficulty recognizing how the meaning of the sentence might change from the beginning to the end, divide the students into two groups. Have one group focus only on the meaning based on events from the beginning and the other group focus only on the meaning based on events from the end. Put students in pairs so one student is from each group. Have students explain the meaning of the sentence in this way: a student from the group focusing on the beginning explains the meaning of the sentence, both students together say, “And then the meaning of the sentence changed,” and then a student from the group focusing on the end explains the meaning of the sentence.

What next?

For additional practice, with students or for students' independent work, apply this learning objective and set of steps to other fiction texts to analyze how a sentence contributes to the development of a theme. (RL6.5)

See more examples of how to teach analysis of theme. (RL6.5)

Objective: In this lesson you will learn how to analyze how a particular sentence contributes to the development of a theme by examining the change in its meaning.

1. Reread the text around the sentence to determine the sentence’s meaning.
2. Reread the end of the story, looking for events that might connect with the sentence in a different way.
3. Ask, “How did the meaning of the sentence change?”
4. Ask, “How does this change in meaning connect to the theme?”

[Interpret the text through a key phrase](#)

[Explain how a theme is developed by analyzing character relationships](#)

[Determine the theme of a text](#)

Question 5

Question #5	How does the part where the woman gives the boy money to buy shoes contribute to the development of the theme of people’s ability to change?
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Standard(s) covered:	RL6.2 Determine how a theme is conveyed through particular details.
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Example response that meets standard	Look-fors
<p>First of all, when the woman gives the boy money to buy shoes it shows how the woman’s feelings about the boy have changed. In the beginning of the story she was pretty mean to him; she kicked him and shook him until his teeth rattled. In the end of the story when she gives him money it’s like she is his mother.</p> <p>The woman has also changed from how she was when she was young. She said, “I have done things, too, which I would not tell you, son—neither tell God, if he didn’t already know.” It seems like when she was young she did things where she only thought about herself and what she wanted. Now she gives away a large amount of money to a boy she is never going to see again. This shows that she thinks of people besides herself and has become very generous.</p> <p>Another way giving the money shows people’s ability to change is that it seems like the boy probably won’t try stealing from people anymore. When the woman gives the boy the \$10 she says to him, “I wish you would behave yourself, son, from here on in.” Then, at the end of the story, it says, “The boy wanted to say something other than ‘Thank you, m’am’ to Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones.” This suggests that it meant a lot to him that the woman was so kind to him. It’s likely that because she was so nice to him in so many ways, he will follow her advice and will behave better in the future.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurately explains more than one change shown in the story (possible changes: woman’s feelings toward the boy, woman from when she was young to when the story takes place, the boy from the beginning to the end of the story).

If students are struggling to answer the text-dependent question, use this follow-up plan for modeling and practice:

Objective	In this lesson you will learn how to explain how a theme is conveyed through particular details by examining changes in characters’ words, actions, and feelings.
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Prior knowledge to review	Determine a theme (RL4.2) Inference—combining information in the text with information you know from life to figure out information the author hinted at but did not directly write. (RL.4.2)
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Steps to achieve objective	Think aloud for direct instruction
1) Reread and note the characters' words, actions, and feelings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I need to reread the part that contains the particular detail mentioned in the question....Okay, so that would be the part where the woman gives the boy money to buy shoes. I'm going to reread a little before and after that detail, and I want to pay attention to the characters' words, actions, and feelings. • Hmm. I think I'll start with the woman's words and actions, since those are written directly in the text...Well, the woman gives the boy \$10. She calls him "son" and says that she wishes that he would behave himself from now on. Then she leads him to the door and says good-bye to him. • Now I need to use those words and actions to infer what she could be feeling. • Well, for her to give him money and call him "son" she must be feeling kind and motherly toward the boy. She also must feel a little hopeful that he'll change if she's giving him money. I'm going to write down those feelings in a table so I remember them. • Now I should pay attention to what the boy is saying, doing and feeling. <i>(see table template and example at end of this lesson)</i> • So what does the boy say? Hmm. Not much. That's interesting. The story says that he wanted to say something else other than "Thank you, m'am" but all he said was thank you. • I also need to look at what the boy did. Hmm. Again, the author doesn't tell us very much. It sounds like he just followed her to the door. It does say he turned and looked back at her before she shut the door. • Wow. There's not a lot for me to go on. I'm going to try to get a picture in my mind of what was happening to see if that helps me figure out how the boy was feeling. • So...I'm picturing the woman handing the boy enough money to buy the shoes he wanted, and the boy just standing there, not doing or saying anything. I'm picturing him basically just standing there, staring at the woman in amazement. • When I think about how I would feel in the situation, and I put it together with what I know from the story, I'm thinking that the boy was probably sort of in shock with how generous the woman was...like he couldn't believe that she just gave him the money. I'm also guessing maybe he felt bad about trying to steal her purse when she was so nice to him. And I wonder if he was wishing that she was related to him and that there was something nice he could do for her to show her how much he appreciated how nice she was.
2) Reread and note changes in the characters' words, actions, and feelings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Okay. So I know what the characters are saying, doing, and feeling when this detail happens in the story. Now I need to think about changes that are connected to that detail. Where are places in the story that the woman and boy say, do and feel different things? • So let me start by skimming the story from the beginning. Is there anything here that shows a change in the woman from when she gave the boy \$10? • Hmmm. Well, in the beginning the woman kicks the boy and shakes him. She seems really angry and mean. Those are definitely different actions and feelings from when she gives him the money! • Now what about the boy? Well, in the beginning, the boy is acting all tough when he tries to steal the purse, but then he gets really scared. Those are different feelings and actions from when the woman gives him the \$10. • I'll write those down so I don't forget, and then I'm going to keep looking for other changes.

2) Ask, “Which changes relate to the theme?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Okay. So what I’m really looking for is changes that relate to the theme. • I know from the question that the theme I need to think about is <i>people’s ability to change</i>. I’m going to reread my list of changes and ask, “Does this change show the woman’s or the boy’s ability to change?” • So the first item on the list was how the woman went from being angry and mean to acting almost like the boy’s mother. Does that show her ability to change? • Hmm. I think it does. It’s not just a random change that the woman made, or something that she got forced to do. She acted differently because she changed inside. • Great! I’m going to put a star next to this change and check the other changes on my list.
3) Explain how the particular detail shows changes that connect to the theme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Okay. So now I’ve found some changes that relate to the theme. Now I need to connect them to the woman giving the boy the money, and explain how those changes show the theme. • Hmm. So the first one I found was where the woman was acting mean and angry, and that was a big change from the detail where she gives him the money and is feeling kind and motherly. So that was a change in her feelings. Let me think about how I could explain that change. • Well, I want to start by mentioning the detail we’re focusing on...and then I’m going to say how it shows the theme, that people can change.... when the woman gives the boy money to buy shoes it shows how the woman’s feelings about the boy have changed. • Now I need to connect the detail to the part we found that shows the change... In the beginning of the story she was pretty mean to him; she kicked him and shook him until his teeth rattled. In the end of the story when she gives him money it’s like she is his mother. • Great—I’ve explained one way that the detail shows changes that connect to the theme! ...But I’m not done yet. I found other changes that relate to the theme, too. I’m going to explain how they connect to the theme, too.

Extension and practice	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If students are having trouble identifying changes that relate to the theme, have small groups of students dramatize each change by acting out what a character was saying or doing early in the story and then what s/he said or did later in the story. Have each group begin and end their performance by holding up a sign that says the theme. Ask audience members to share examples they noticed in the skit that connected or didn’t connect to the theme. • If students are ready for an extension, have students practice this work without telling them the theme. Have them use changes in characters’ words, actions and feelings to determine what they might have learned and use this lesson to determine a theme. • Another option for an extension is to have students choose another scene from the story that conveys the theme. Have students identify changes in characters’ words, actions and feelings that reveal that they have learned a lesson related to the theme. Then, have them find a scene that highlights these changes—either a scene that exemplifies what the characters were like before they changed or a scene that highlights how they are different now that they have changed. 	
What next?	
For additional practice, with students or for students’ independent work, apply this learning objective and set of steps to other fiction texts to teach explaining how a theme is conveyed through particular details. (RL6.2)	See more examples of how to teach about theme. (RL6.2)

Objective: In this lesson you will learn how to explain how a theme is conveyed through particular details by examining changes in characters' words, actions, and feelings.

1. Reread the part that contains the particular detail, noting the characters' words, actions, and feelings.
2. Reread the rest of the text, looking for parts that connect to the particular detail through a "theme change".
3. Explain how the particular detail shows changes that connect to the theme.

[Determine the theme of a story and analyze its development](#)

Table template:

	Words, actions and feelings at the part being focused on	How the character has changed
The woman		
The boy		

Table example:

	Words, actions and feelings at the part being focused on	How the character has changed
The woman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calls the boy "son" • Gives the boy money • Feels kind and motherly • Feels hopeful that the boy will change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was angry and mean—now kind and motherly • When she was young did bad things where she didn't think about other people—now generous • Calls the boy "boy" at very end
The boy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Says "thank you, m'am" • Follows the woman to the door and looks at her • Can't believe how generous the woman was • Feels bad about trying to steal the woman's purse • Wishes the woman was related to him • Wishes there was something nice he could do for her to show how much he appreciates what she did for him 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acted tough in the beginning—now more responsible • Felt scared—now grateful • Only cared about what he wanted—now cares about others