

## Integrity and “Thank You, M’am”

<p><b>Grade Level: 9</b></p> <p><b>Character Education Focus: Integrity</b></p> <p><b>Summary</b></p> <p>Students will examine, discuss, and write about their own views on <i>integrity</i> as a preparation for reading the Langston Hughes story “Thank You, M’am.” This lesson offers several variations for studying this story and examining the <i>integrity</i> of the main characters (i.e., independent reading, interactive reading, and a Socratic Seminar approach). (<i>Two or three 50-minute class periods depending on the activities used</i>)</p>	<p><b>Materials Needed</b></p> <p>Copies of “Thank You, Ma’m” by Langston Hughes, which can be found in:</p> <p>Hughes, L. (2000). Thank you, ma’m. In Proust, R.E., Anderson, R., Brinnin, J.M., Leggett, J. and Vacca, R., <i>Elements of fiction 9<sup>th</sup> grade level</i> (pp. 120-127). Austin, TX: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Harcourt Brace &amp; Company.</p>
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### Academic-Character Education Objectives

Students will:

1. Explore the definition of *integrity* through a class discussion and provide positive and negative examples from the story and their own experiences.
2. Determine character traits, including *integrity*, by analyzing the dialogue in a short story.
3. Formulate judgments about the characters and support the judgment with convincing evidence.
4. Reflect upon and write about how they demonstrate *integrity* and how their *integrity* affects others.

### California English-Language Arts Standards Addressed

Reading

1.0 Word Analysis, Fluency, and Systematic Vocabulary Development

- 1.1 Identify and use the literal and figurative meanings of words and understand word derivations.

3.0 Literary Response and Analysis

- 3.4 Determine characters' traits by what the characters say about themselves in narration, dialogue, dramatic monologue, and soliloquy.

## Listening and Speaking

### 1.0 Listening and Speaking Strategies

- 1.1 Formulate judgments about the ideas under discussion and support those judgments with convincing evidence.

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## Lesson Procedures

### Part One: Integrity

1. Explain that in preparation for reading the story “Thank you, Ma’m” by Langston Hughes students will explore the trait of *integrity*. Ask the class what *integrity* means. Using the Latin root *integer*, (whole or complete, as used in *integral*, *integer*, and *integrate*), guide the discussion to help the students include the following in their definition:
  - a. The quality or state of being whole, unbroken, complete.
  - b. Having sound moral principles.
  - c. Having the courage to do what is right, even if it is difficult.
  - d. Being honest, fair, and trustworthy.
2. Explain, if necessary, how being “whole” means not compromising values including honesty, fairness, and trustworthiness. Suggest that as a result of demonstrating *integrity*, respect and trust can develop.
3. Have students use a T-chart to create lists of people who show or *should* show *integrity* and a list of people who often do not show *integrity*.

The lists might include judges, police, parents, doctors, and religious leaders on one list, and thieves, cheaters (including cheaters on academic work) liars, criminals on the other side.

If students suggest questionable individuals such as gang members or some celebrities, ask to whom these people show *integrity* and to whom they do not show *integrity*. Ask, *Is it integrity—wholeness, completeness, of sound principles—if it is shown only part of the time or in limited situations or to selected people? Does someone have integrity if they choose to be fair and honest only in certain circumstances? Does this make them trustworthy?*

Ask what happens to society when we cannot rely on the *integrity* of the people in the first list (judges, police, parents, doctors, and religious leaders.) Be respectful and attentive if the students’ experiences and perceptions are different than your own. They are exploring the definition and possibly struggling with the implication of *integrity* in their own lives as teenagers.

Alternatively, use the same procedure to list behaviors (rather than people) that show *integrity* and behaviors that show a lack of *integrity*.

4. Have students respond to these warm-up prompts: *Is it more natural to have integrity, or more natural not to have integrity? What might cause people to have integrity or to lose their integrity?*  
  
(See below for alternate journaling prompts as well as the “Rubric for Assessing Journal Prompt Responses.”)
5. After writing, have students pair up and share their responses. Conduct a class discussion based on their responses. They may bring up corruption, greed, poverty, and peer pressure on one side, and family, religious and ethical teachings on the other.

## Part Two: Reading and Responding

6. Explain that the Langston Hughes story explores several values, including *integrity*, and they will explore the nature of *integrity* through the story.
7. Read the story “Thank You, M’am” by Langston Hughes. This lesson offers three paths through the story:
  - a. Many students will best master the content of the story through an in-class interactive reading. See the questions provided in the “Extensions and Variations” section.
  - b. Some students will be able to read the story for content as a homework assignment. Their reading may be verified with the content quiz found in the “Assessment” section. A teacher-led discussion using the discussion questions found in “Extensions and Variations” could follow the content quiz.
  - c. For more capable students conduct a Socratic Seminar about the story. Remind them to use examples and references to the text to support and explain their assertions. You will find discussion questions for the Socratic Seminar in the “Extensions and Variations” section.
8. After the reading and discussion have students think about and respond to this prompt or writing below their response to the initial warm-up prompt: *Can people improve the integrity (or trustworthiness, or fairness or honesty) of others through their own actions? Why or why not? If yes, how? If no, why not?*

## Part Three: Making It Personal

9. Think and write about the *integrity* you show through your actions, including actions at school. *How do those actions affect others? What can you do to improve your own integrity and integrity of those around you?* Include the following in your writing:
  - *Write about a time when your integrity as a challenged or compromised and what you did or what you could have done differently.*
  - *How has your integrity (or lack of integrity) affected the integrity of other people?*

## Academic–Character Education Assessment

- Include the term *integrity* on a weekly vocabulary list.
- The following knowledge-level quiz could be used to verify independent reading of “Thank You Ma’m”
  1. What time was it when Roger and Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones met? (Late at night, 11 p.m.)
  2. What does she do for a living? (Hair dresser in hotel beauty shop)
  3. Where does Luella Jones take Roger? (To her home)
  4. What is the first thing she has him do? (Wash his face)
  5. What do they eat? (Lima beans and ham, a small cake)
  6. What does Roger say as he leaves her apartment? (Thank you, M’am)
- The quality and frequency of the students’ contributions to any of the discussions can be assessed.
- Use one or more of the discussion questions in “Extensions and Variations” for an open - or closed - book quiz asking for specific support from the text.

- Assign an essay responding to this prompt: *Discuss how Langston Hughes explores integrity, including trustworthiness, fairness and honesty, through what his characters say and do in "Thank You, Ma'm." Support your assertions with examples from the text.*
- The following rubric can be used by teacher and students to assess students' responses to the writing prompts.

<b>A Rubric: Assessing Journal Prompt Responses</b>	
10	A full, interesting response that shows real effort, an intelligent understanding of the prompt, sustained thought, the ability to communicate clearly and effectively, and a command of significant details, examples, and evidence
9	A full, thoughtful and appropriate response to the prompt that shows significant effort, and appropriate details, examples and evidence
8	A thoughtful and appropriate response to the prompt that shows effort using details, evidence or examples
7	A significant response that shows effort and thought, communicated with details, evidence, or examples
6	An appropriate response showing some thought and effort with limited details, evidence or examples
5	An appropriate response with some minor elaboration
4	Elaboration in response to the prompt with some details
3	Some elaboration in response to the prompt
2	Brief, general response to the prompt
1	A positive or negative answer without elaboration

### Reflective Journaling Prompts

- Does poverty cause people to lose their *integrity*? Support your answer with examples and evidence.
- Are some people born with more *integrity* than others? Support your answer with examples and evidence.
- Some say that there is "honor among thieves." Can people who do not obey the laws of the land and who do criminal acts still have *integrity* by being loyal to fellow law-breakers? Is this *integrity*? Why or why not? Support your answer with examples and evidence.
- School work often challenges our *integrity*. When is it dishonest or unfair to help a friend with school work? Is it ever the right thing to do?
- If you have not always had *integrity*, it may have caused someone to distrust you. Perhaps this is a friend, a teacher or a parent. Did you re-establish trust with this individual? How long did it take to re-establish trust? Use specific examples or evidence.

## Extensions and Variations

Part one of this lesson could be completed in one class session. Part two has three options: conduct an interactive reading using the interactive reading guide questions below; ask students to read the story as homework followed by an in-class quiz and/or discussion using the quiz provided in the “assessment” section and the discussion questions below; or after reading the story as homework conduct a Socratic Seminar using the discussion questions below. Part three requires another class session or can be assigned as homework.

### Interactive Reading Guide for “Thank you, M’am”

Interactive reading strategies place the responsibility on students for constructing their own meaning from the text. Teachers or students read the story, stopping frequently to change readers and to have students summarize, predict, make connections, make judgments, ask for clarification, make inference, and ask on-the-surface and under-the-surface questions.

End of paragraph 1

- Summarize what has happened so far in the story. If necessary, have the students list what they remember and then ask them to choose the most important five events.
- Predict what will happen next. Accept all answers, but ask for grounds for the prediction, as appropriate.
- Make connections: What would you do if you were the boy? If you were the woman?
- Make judgments: Was it okay for the woman to kick and shake the boy until his teeth rattled? Can you think of a case where the boy would be justified in doing what he did?
- A Graphic Organizer for Facts and Inferences  
Have students use a donut-shaped graphic organizer for fact and inference responses. Write the character’s name in the donut hole. For example, place *the woman* in the center of the donut and facts about her around the outside of the big circle. (*She carries a very large and heavy purse. She is out at 11:00 p.m. alone. She kicks him and then reaches down and picks him up by the shirt front.*) What can you infer about the woman or the boy from this passage? Place inferences on the donut ring some of which may not be accurate. (*She is physically strong and the boy is small. She’s a street walker. She’s not afraid.*)

End of paragraph 2

- Are there any items needing clarification? (If no one asks, ask a student what a pocketbook is.)
- What can you infer about the woman from this paragraph?

Paragraphs 3, 4 and 5

- Make a judgment: Is the boy being honest? Give evidence.
- Should an adult ask the question the woman did and expect an honest answer?
- Make connections: What would you do in a situation like this when you are being questioned by an adult?

End of paragraph 9

- Make a judgment: Is the boy being honest now? If so, why do you think he is being honest?

End of paragraph 11

- Make a judgment: Is the boy now being honest?
- Predict: What will the woman do next?

Paragraph 15

- Ask for items needing clarification: If students do not ask about the term “willow-wild,” discuss it.

Paragraph 16

- Ask for on-the-surface and under-the-surface questions. Someone should ask what she means by “You ought to be my son. I would teach you right from wrong.”

Paragraph 20

- Summarize Mrs. Jones’s comments.
- What can you infer about her marital status from her name?
- Predict what she will do to make the boy remember her.

Paragraph 21

- What can you infer about Mrs. Bates marital life, family life, and financial status from where she lives?

Middle of paragraph 24

- Predict: What will Roger do when she turns him loose?

End of paragraph 24

- Ask for both on-the-surface and under-the-surface questions. Why did Roger go wash his face? (under the surface)

End of paragraph 28

- Make a judgment: Is Roger now telling the truth? What is the evidence?

End of paragraph 30

- Ask for both-on-the-surface and under-the-surface questions. They should include:
- Was Mrs. Bates correct that he was hungry? (on the surface)
- Is Roger telling the truth about wanting the blue suede shoes? (on the surface)
- What reasons would he have to lie? To tell the truth? (on the surface)

End of paragraph 31

- Infer using the same donut at the end of paragraph 1:
- What facts do you know about Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones?
- What can you infer from these facts?
- Ask for questions, which should include, “Is she telling the truth when she tells Roger he could have asked her for blue suede shoes?”

End of paragraph 34

- Predict: What do you think Mrs. Jones will say next?

End of paragraph 36

- Infer: What do you, the reader, know about her because she says, “Well, I wasn’t going to say that”?
- Student-generated questions should include what she means by “neither tell God, if he didn’t already know.” (This is a crucial question.)
- Infer: Why does she feed him and have him comb his hair?

Middle of paragraph 37

- Infer: What has changed so that Mrs. Jones does not protect her purse or try to keep Roger in her apartment?
- Make a judgment: Why does Roger want to be trusted?

- Questions the students should ask: What does it mean, “He did not trust the woman not to trust him?”

End of paragraph 38

- Infer: Why does Mrs. Bates not have Roger work for his dinner by running an errand for her?
- What difference would it make if Roger had somehow “earned” his supper? Why?

End of paragraph 41

- Predict how the evening will end when she calls him “son.”

End of paragraph 42

- Clarify: “Shoes come by devilish like that will burn your feet.”
- Clarify: What does she want (wish) from him?
- Predict: Will he give her what she wants?

End of story

- Make judgments: Would it have been a better story if she had stayed in his life?

### Discussion Questions

These questions can be used for a teacher-led discussion, to guide independent reading, or for a Socratic Seminar:

1. What do you know about Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones from her name and from what she says?
2. Why does Roger say he tried to steal Luella Jones’ pocketbook?
3. Is this the real reason? (inference, not in text)
4. Why does Luella Jones not lecture the boy about stealing?
5. Why did Luella not have Roger work for his dinner? (inference, not in text)
6. Why did she not invite him to come back to see her? (inference, not in text)
7. Why did she take Roger home and give him the money? (inference, not in text)
8. Is Luella Jones a person of *integrity*? Has she always been?
9. Why does Roger wash his face instead of running away? (inference, not in text)
10. Why does Roger sit “on the far side of the room where he thought she could easily see him”?
11. Why did Roger not steal her pocketbook when he was in her apartment and she had gone behind the screen to cook? (inference, not in text)
12. What does Langston Hughes mean when he writes, “He did not trust the woman not to trust him”? How does this relate to *integrity*?
13. Does Roger change in the course of his encounter with Luella Jones? (inference, not in text)

### Family Involvement

Use a Family Journal activity with these interview questions:

1. Tell me about someone you trust to be honest or fair.
2. Tell me about a time when it was difficult to be honest, fair or to act with *integrity*.

### Teacher Notes or References

Socratic Seminar is an open-forum style discussion in which the instructor does not lecture and students discuss the reading. Students are not to interrupt each other nor criticize each other’s responses. They are to build on each other’s ideas. They should make specific references to the texts rather than generalizations or guesses. Grade them based on the quality of their contributions, the support they cite for their assertions and how well they listen to others. For more information on the Socratic Seminar process go to:

<http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/schools/wjhs/depts/socialst/ams/Skills/SocraticSeminar/SocraticSeminarIntro.html>

Family journals are designed to include adult family members in the students' academic and character education. The students interview adult family members and record in their journals what the family members say. Student instructions for completing a family journal are available.

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