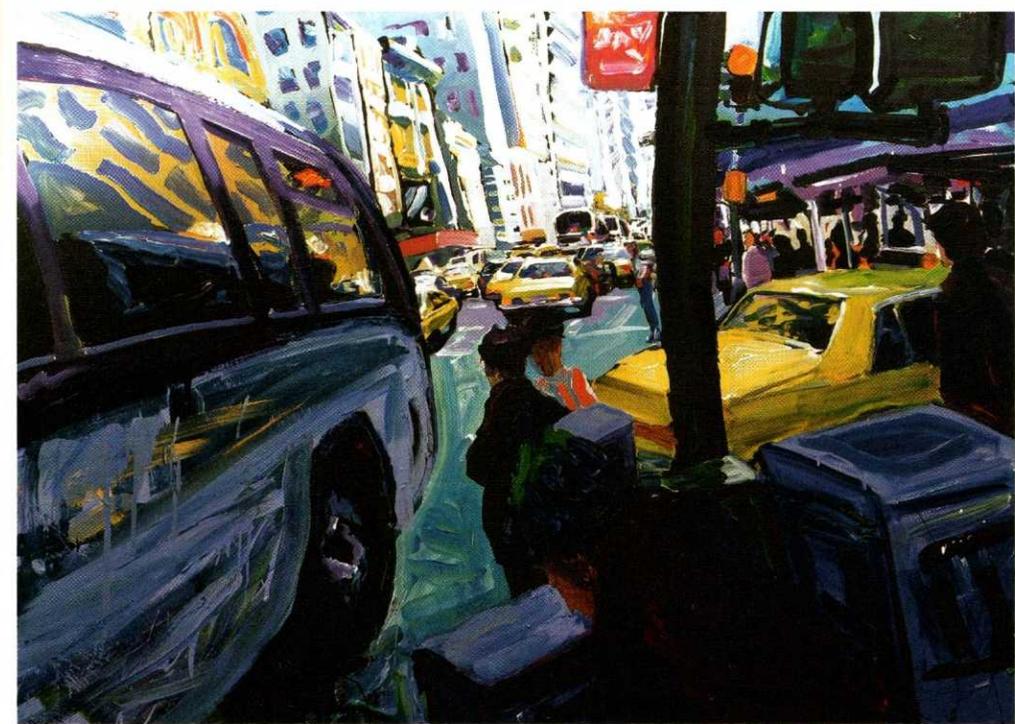


Prepare to Read

Thank You, M'am



Empire State, Tom Christopher, Vicki Morgan Associates



Take It to the Net

Visit www.phschool.com for interactive activities and instruction related to "Thank You, M'am," including

- background
- graphic organizers
- literary elements
- reading strategies

Preview

Connecting to the Literature

In "Thank You, M'am," a boy learns an important lesson about kindness and trust from a surprising source. Before reading, think about an unexpected act of kindness you have done for someone or someone has done for you.

Background

"Thank You, M'am," by Langston Hughes, is set in Harlem, a community in New York. Like many urban areas, Harlem experienced rapid population growth early in the twentieth century. Many single-family buildings were converted into small apartments. The character Mrs. Jones lives in one of these "kitchenette" apartments—a bathroom and one large room with a mini-kitchen in the corner of the room.

Literary Analysis

Implied Theme

The **theme** of a literary work is the major idea or underlying message that it communicates.

- A **stated theme** is directly expressed by the narrator or a character.
- An **implied theme** is suggested by story events as well as the characters' actions and reactions.

"Thank You, M'am" has an implied theme about the effects of kindness and trust. Themes of kindness and trust appear in literature of all time periods. As you read "Thank You, M'am," identify what message this contemporary short story communicates.

Connecting Literary Elements

The theme or message that is suggested by characters' actions often depends on a **character's motives**—the reasons for his or her actions. In this story, a boy snatches a purse because he wants money to buy shoes. By the end of the story, he discovers he wants something much more valuable. When his motives change, so do his actions. Use these focus questions to help you recognize characters' motives in "Thank You, M'am":

1. How do Roger's actions change during the story?
2. Why do they change?

Reading Strategy

Responding to Characters' Actions

Reading a story is more enjoyable if you become involved with the people in it. One way to do this is to **respond to the characters' actions**. Ask yourself,

- "Would I do that?"
- "Do I think the character should do that?"
- "How would I feel if that happened to me?"

As you read the story, record your responses to the characters' actions in a chart like the one shown.

Vocabulary Development

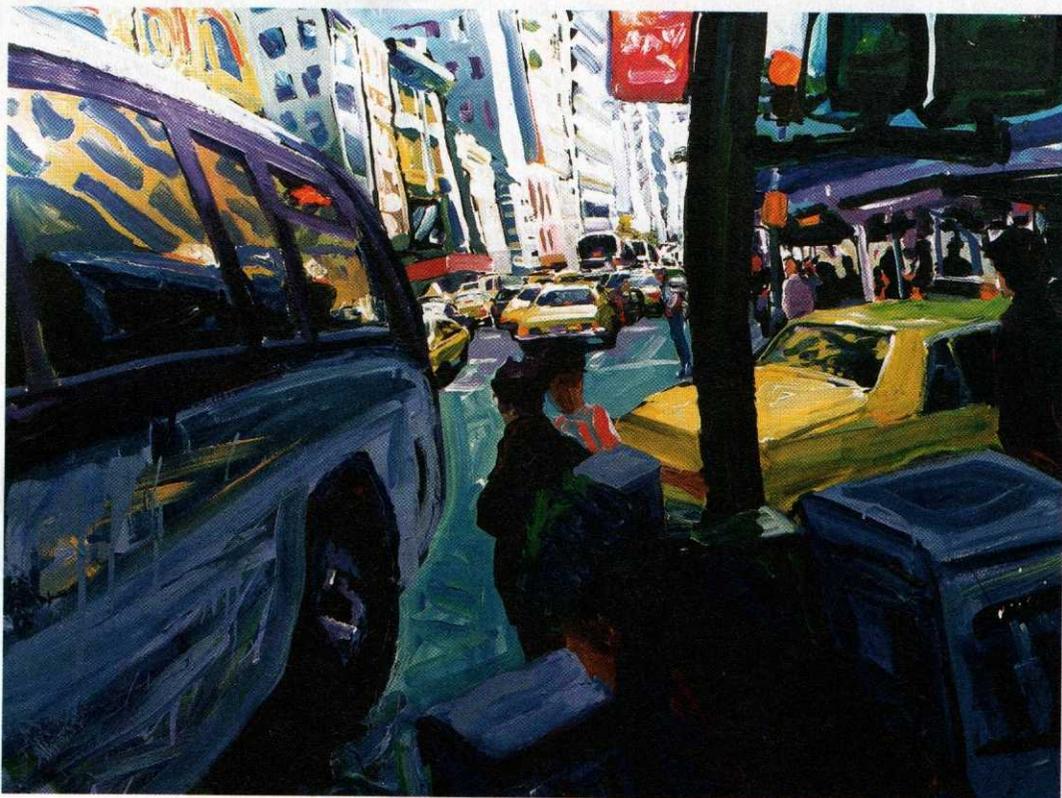
presentable (prē zent' ə bəl) *adj.* in proper order for being seen, met, etc., by others (p. 174)

mistrusted (mis' trust' əd) *v.* doubted (p. 175)

latching (lach' in) *v.* grasping or attaching oneself to (p. 176)

barren (bar' ən) *adj.* sterile; empty (p. 176)

Story Event	
	Purse snatching
My Response	
1	I wouldn't do that.
2	He shouldn't do that
3	If I were Mrs. Jones, I would be furious.



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Thank You, M'am

Langston Hughes

She was a large woman with a large purse that had everything in it but hammer and nails. It had a long strap and she carried it slung across her shoulder. It was about eleven o'clock at night, and she was walking alone, when a boy ran up behind her and tried to snatch her purse. The strap broke with the single tug the boy gave it from behind. But the boy's weight, and the weight of the purse combined caused him to lose his balance. Instead of taking off full blast as he had hoped, the boy fell on his back on the sidewalk, and his legs flew up. The large woman simply turned around and kicked him

Reading Strategy
Responding to Characters' Actions How did you respond when the woman resists the purse-snatching?

right square in his blue-jeaned sitter. Then she reached down, picked the boy up by his shirt front, and shook him until his teeth rattled.

After that the woman said, "Pick up my pocketbook, boy, and give it here."

She still held him. But she bent down enough to permit him to stoop and pick up her purse. Then she said, "Now ain't you ashamed of yourself?"

Firmly gripped by his shirt front, the boy said, "Yes'm."

The woman said, "What did you want to do it for?"

The boy said, "I didn't aim to."

She said, "You a lie!"

By that time two or three people passed, stopped, turned to look, and some stood watching.

"If I turn you loose, will you run?" asked the woman.

"Yes'm," said the boy.

"Then I won't turn you loose," said the woman. She did not release him.

"Lady, I'm sorry," whispered the boy.

"Um-hum! Your face is dirty. I got a great mind to wash your face for you. Ain't you got nobody home to tell you to wash your face?"

"No'm," said the boy.

"Then it will get washed this evening," said the large woman starting up the street, dragging the frightened boy behind her.

He looked as if he were fourteen or fifteen, frail and willow-wild, in tennis shoes and blue jeans.

The woman said, "You ought to be my son. I would teach you right from wrong. Least I can do right now is to wash your face. Are you hungry?"

"No'm," said the being-dragged boy. "I just want you to turn me loose."

"Was I bothering you when I turned that corner?" asked the woman.

"No'm."

"But you put yourself in contact with me," said the woman.

"If you think that that contact is not going to last awhile, you got another thought coming. When I get through with you, sir, you are going to remember Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones."

Sweat popped out on the boy's face and he began to struggle. Mrs. Jones stopped, jerked him around in front of her, put a half nelson¹ about his neck, and continued to drag him up the street. When she got to her door, she dragged the boy inside, down a hall, and into a large kitchenette-furnished room at the rear of the house. She switched on the light and left the door open. The boy could hear other roomers laughing and talking in the large house. Some of their

1. **half nelson** wrestling hold using one arm.

◀ Critical Viewing

In what ways does the picture at left show that it would be easy to "disappear" in the scene?

[Analyze]

Literary Analysis

Theme How does this dialogue point to the author's message?

✓ Reading Check

How do Roger and Mrs. Jones meet?

doors were open, too, so he knew he and the woman were not alone. The woman still had him by the neck in the middle of her room.

She said, "What is your name?"

"Roger," answered the boy.

"Then, Roger, you go to that sink and wash your face," said the woman, whereupon she turned him loose—at last. Roger looked at the door—looked at the woman—looked at the door—and went to the sink.

"Let the water run until it gets warm," she said. "Here's a clean towel."

"You gonna take me to jail?" asked the boy, bending over the sink.

"Not with that face, I would not take you nowhere," said the woman. "Here I am trying to get home to cook me a bite to eat and you snatch my pocketbook! Maybe you ain't been to your supper either, late as it be. Have you?"

"There's nobody home at my house," said the boy.

"Then we'll eat," said the woman. "I believe you're hungry—or been hungry—to try to snatch my pocketbook."

"I wanted a pair of blue suede shoes," said the boy.

"Well, you didn't have to snatch my pocketbook to get some suede shoes," said Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones. "You could of asked me."

"M'am?"

The water dripping from his face, the boy looked at her. There was a long pause. A very long pause. After he had dried his face and not knowing what else to do dried it again, the boy turned around, wondering what next. The door was open. He could make a dash for it down the hall. He could run, run, run, run, run!

The woman was sitting on the day bed. After awhile she said, "I were young once and I wanted things I could not get."

There was another long pause. The boy's mouth opened. Then he frowned, but not knowing he frowned.

The woman said, "Um-hum! You thought I was going to say *but*, didn't you? You thought I was going to say, *but I didn't snatch people's pocketbooks*. Well, I wasn't going to say that." Pause. Silence. "I have done things, too, which I would not tell you, son—neither tell God, if He didn't already know. So you set down while I fix us something to eat. You might run that comb through your hair so you will look presentable."

In another corner of the room behind a screen was a gas plate and an icebox. Mrs. Jones got up and went behind the screen. The woman did not watch the boy to see if he was going to run now, nor did she watch her purse which she left behind her on the day bed. But the boy took care to sit on the far side of the room where he thought she could easily see him out of the corner of her eye, if she wanted to. He did not trust the woman not to

Literary Analysis

Theme and Characters' Motives What does this speech tell you about Mrs. Jones's reasons for helping Roger?

presentable (prē zent' ə bəl)
adj. in proper order for being seen, met, etc., by others



Minnie, 1930, William Johnson, National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC

▲ **Critical Viewing** Does the woman in the painting resemble Mrs. Jones as described in the story? Explain. **[Make a Judgment]**

trust him. And he did not want to be mistrusted now.

“Do you need somebody to go to the store,” asked the boy, “maybe to get some milk or something?”

“Don’t believe I do,” said the woman, “unless you just want sweet milk yourself. I was going to make cocoa out of this canned milk I got here.”

“That will be fine,” said the boy.

mistrusted (mis’ trust’ əd)
v. doubted

 **Reading Check**

What does the woman do with Roger?

She heated some lima beans and ham she had in the icebox, made the cocoa, and set the table. The woman did not ask the boy anything about where he lived, or his folks, or anything else that would embarrass him. Instead, as they ate, she told him about her job in a hotel beauty shop that stayed open late, what the work was like, and how all kinds of women came in and out, blondes, redheads, and brunettes. Then she cut him a half of her ten-cent cake.

“Eat some more, son,” she said.

When they were finished eating she got up and said, “Now, here, take this ten dollars and buy yourself some blue suede shoes. And next time, do not make the mistake of latching onto *my* pocket-book *nor nobody else’s*—because shoes come by devilish like that will burn your feet. I got to get my rest now. But from here on in, son, I hope you will behave yourself.”

She led him down the hall to the front door and opened it. “Good-night! Behave yourself, boy!” she said, looking out into the street.

The boy wanted to say something other than, “Thank you, m’am,” to Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones, but although his lips moved, he couldn’t even say that as he turned at the foot of the barren stoop and looked up at the large woman in the door. Then she shut the door.

latching (lach’ in) v.
grasping or attaching
oneself to

barren (bar’ en) adj.
sterile; empty

Langston Hughes

(1902–1967)



Born in Joplin, Missouri, Langston Hughes moved often as a young boy. He turned to writing as a way of deal-

ing with his ever-changing home address and with the difficulties of being a young African American in the early 1900s. People first noticed Hughes in 1921 when his poem “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” was published shortly after he graduated from high school. He soon won other prizes and opportunities, including a college scholarship. His first book of poetry, *The Weary Blues*, was published in 1926. Hughes wrote fiction, plays, and essays; translated other poets; and collected African American folklore.

Review and Assess

Thinking about the Selection

1. **Respond:** Do you think Mrs. Jones is wise or foolish to trust Roger? Why?
2. (a) **Recall:** What does Mrs. Jones do when Roger tries to steal her purse? (b) **Interpret:** What can you tell about her character from this action? (c) **Connect:** How are her actions connected to her past experiences?
3. (a) **Recall:** What does Roger do when Mrs. Jones leaves him alone with her purse? (b) **Infer:** Why does he do this? (c) **Compare and Contrast:** How have Roger’s behavior and attitude changed?
4. (a) **Recall:** What do Mrs. Jones and Roger talk about during their meal? (b) **Draw Conclusions:** Why doesn’t Mrs. Jones ask Roger any personal questions?
5. (a) **Recall:** What does Roger say when he leaves the apartment? (b) **Infer:** What more does he want to say? (c) **Interpret:** Why can’t he say more?
6. (a) **Predict:** What effect will Mrs. Jones’s actions have on Roger’s future? (b) **Make a Judgment:** Does Mrs. Jones make good choices about how to treat Roger?

Review and Assess

Literary Analysis

Implied Theme

1. What **theme** about kindness and trust is communicated in the story?
2. Why do you think the theme is implied rather than stated?
3. In a chart like the one shown, give three examples of clues that reveal the story's theme.

Type of Clue	Example from Story
Words	
Character's actions	
Ideas	

4. How does the title "Thank you, M'am" relate to the theme?

Connecting Literary Elements

5. What is Roger's motivation for stealing the purse? On your paper, fill in a diagram to show this cause-and-effect relationship.



6. How do Roger's motives and actions change during the story?

Reading Strategy

Responding to Characters' Actions

7. How did you respond when Mrs. Jones physically dragged Roger to the apartment?
8. Were you surprised by any of Mrs. Jones's actions? Why or why not?
9. Describe your responses to both characters at the end of the story.

Extend Understanding

10. **Social Studies Connection:** Compare Mrs. Jones's treatment of Roger to the punishment for stealing in the American West in the 1800s.
11. **Take a Position:** What do you think is the most effective treatment for criminals? Explain.

Quick Review

The **implied theme** of a literary work is the message suggested by the work. A **stated theme** is directly expressed by the narrator or a character. To review theme, see page 171.

The **motives** of characters are their reasons for taking certain actions. To review characters' motivations, see page 171.

Responding to the characters' actions helps you understand the characters and get involved in the story.



Take It to the Net
www.phschool.com

Take the interactive self-test online to check your understanding of the selection.

Integrate Language Skills

Vocabulary Development Lesson

Word Analysis: Latin Suffix *-able*

You can add the Latin suffix *-able* to some verbs to form adjectives that show an ability or quality. For example: wash + *-able* = washable.

Add *-able* to the verbs *disagree* and *present*. Use one of the new words in each sentence.

1. "You might run that comb through your hair so you will look ___?___."
2. The first encounter between Roger and Mrs. Jones was ___?___.

Spelling Strategy

When you add the prefix *mis-* to a word, do not change the original spelling: *mis-* + *spell* = *misspell*.

Add *mis-* to the following words.

1. take
2. trust
3. step

Grammar Lesson

Principal Parts of Verbs

Every verb has four **principal parts**: the base form (present tense), past tense, present participle, and past participle. Regular verbs form the past and past participle by adding *-ed* or *-d* to the base, but **irregular verbs** follow different patterns. You need to memorize them.

Here are some common irregular verbs and their irregular principal parts:

Base (Present)	Past	Participle
eat	ate	eaten
have	had	had
sing	sang	sung
drink	drank	drunk
grow	grew	grown

Concept Development: Synonyms

Synonyms are words with the same or similar meanings, such as *big* and *large*. Sometimes a synonym is a phrase, not a single word. On your paper, rewrite these sentences substituting a vocabulary word as a synonym for the word or phrase in italics.

1. There was little furniture in the cold, *empty* apartment.
2. Roger *was suspicious of* kindness from adults.
3. After putting on a clean sweater, she felt *neat* enough to meet her new neighbors.
4. My little sister was always *clinging* onto us when we wanted to go to the mall.

► For more practice, see page R32, Exercise A.

Practice On your paper, replace each verb in parentheses with the form of that verb that is correct in the sentence. Use the past participle after a helping verb such as *had* or *have*.

1. When Roger grabbed her purse, the strap (break).
2. He had (steal) the purse to get money.
3. With the money, Roger (buy) a pair of blue suede shoes.
4. Mrs. Jones (speak) to him calmly.

Writing Application Go through some of your previous writing. Circle any incorrect use of the past tense and past participles of irregular verbs and then write the verb correctly.

Writing Lesson

Letter of Guidance

Imagine that you are Roger twenty years later. Write a short letter to a young relative who needs guidance. Explain how meeting Mrs. Jones changed your life.

Prewriting Picture what Roger is like and what he has done with his life in the past twenty years. Then, brainstorm as many points of advice as you can think of. Circle three or four that seem the most important, and build your letter around them.

Drafting To support your ideas, use quotations from the story, opinions from experts, or an **analogy**—a specific likeness between things that are quite different.

Model: Support Ideas

The feeling that Mrs. Jones was giving me a chance to be trustworthy was both exciting and scary—*like getting ready to jump off a diving board*. I was jumping into a new kind of life.

The words in italics show an analogy, one way of supporting ideas.

Revising Reread your letter, underlining any analogies, opinions, and quotations you have used. Add them if they are missing.

 Prentice Hall Writing and Grammar Connection: Chapter 7, Sections 3 and 4

Extension Activities

Listening and Speaking Prepare a **speech outline** for a talk in which you persuade your audience that Mrs. Jones did—or did not—do the right thing in dealing with Roger. In your outline, include the following:

- an introduction in which you state your position
- several reasons for your position
- a conclusion in which you leave your listeners with a memorable idea or quotation.

Then, deliver a **speech** following the outline. Ask for feedback from your audience to determine whether you have convinced them of your position.

Research and Technology Write the copy for a **book jacket** for a new collection of poems and stories by Langston Hughes. Research the Harlem Renaissance and Hughes's role in it, as well as his influence on later writers. Use this information to write three paragraphs that point out the importance of Hughes's career and make readers want to buy the book. Include quotations.



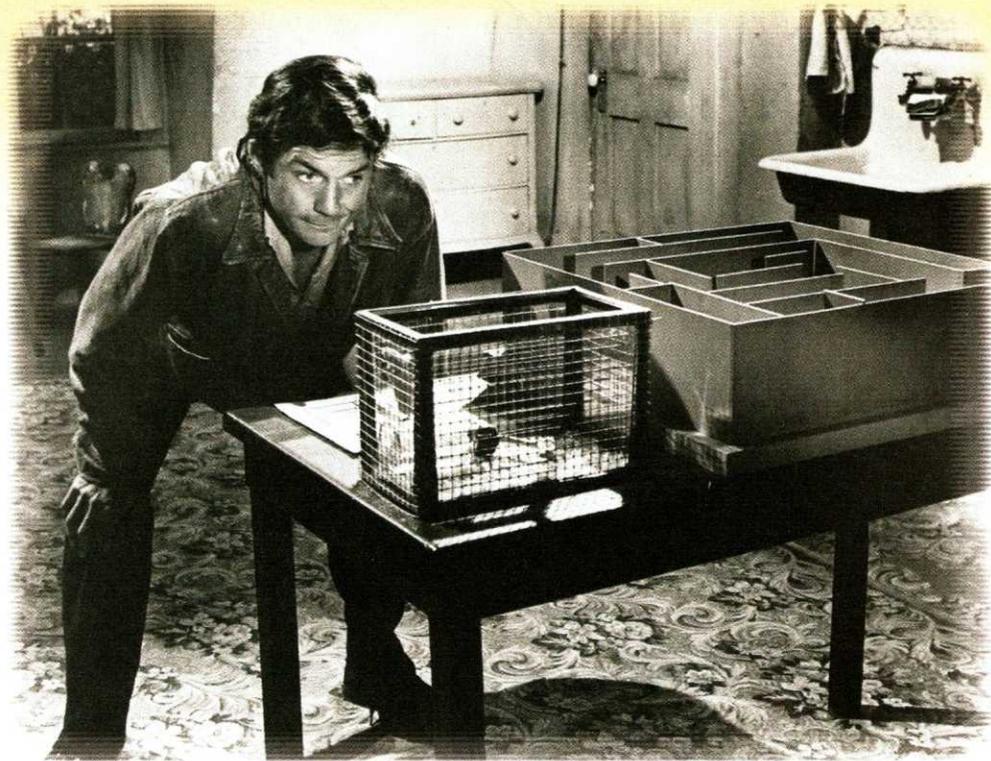
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www.phschool.com

Go online for an additional research activity using the Internet.

Prepare to Read

Flowers for Algernon



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Preview

Connecting to the Literature

Charlie Gordon, the main character in “Flowers for Algernon,” takes a huge risk because he wants to “be like everyone else.” Make a connection between his decision and situations you have observed in which people misjudged or made fun of someone whom they saw as “different.”

Background

The scientists in “Flowers for Algernon” focus on the main character’s “IQ,” which is short for *intelligence quotient*. Although one’s IQ has traditionally been the most common measure of “intelligence,” contemporary researchers have come to recognize that one test cannot accurately measure the wide range of abilities and learning potential that people have.