

## Integrity in "Thank You Ma'm"

**Pillar: Positive Social Environments**

**Division: III**

**Grade Level: 9**

**Core Curriculum Connections: English Language Arts**

**I. Rationale:** *Integrity* is an essential character trait that plays an integral role in promoting positive social environments within the classroom and a virtue that is necessary for the long-term healthy social and emotional development of our youth. This lesson provides students with the opportunity to personally reflect on what *integrity* means to them, explore this theme in literature, and integrate prior knowledge with new understandings to recognize the impact of *integrity* in one's life and how it influences the lives of others. Students will examine, discuss, and write about their own views on *integrity* 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 *integrity* of the main characters (i.e., [interactive reading](#), and a [Socratic Seminar](#) approach).

### II. Activity Objectives:

*The 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.

### III. Curriculum Outcomes:

#### Language Arts 9

##### General Outcome 1

Students will listen, speak, read, write, view and represent to explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences.

##### 1.1 Discover and Explore

- talk with others and experience a variety of oral, print and other media texts to explore, develop and justify own opinions and points of view
- explore and explain how interactions with others and with oral, print and other media texts affect personal understandings

##### 1.2 Clarify and Extend

<p><b>Consider others' ideas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>integrate own perspectives and interpretations with new understandings developed through discussing and through experiencing a variety of oral, print and other media texts</li> </ul>
<p><b>General Outcome 2</b></p> <p>Students will listen, speak, read, write, view and represent to comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print and other media texts.</p>
<p><b>2.1 Use Strategies and Cues</b></p> <p><b>Use prior knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>discuss how interpretations of the same text might vary, according to the prior knowledge and experience of various readers</li> <li>use previous reading experiences, personal experiences and prior knowledge as a basis for reflecting on and interpreting ideas encountered in texts</li> </ul> <p><b>Use phonics and structural analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>apply and explain effective procedures for identifying and comprehending words in context; adjust procedures according to the purpose for reading and the complexity of the texts</li> </ul>
<p><b>2.2 Respond to Texts</b></p> <p><b>Experience various texts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>compare and contrast own life situation with themes of oral, print and other media texts</li> </ul> <p>Construct meaning from texts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>analyze how the choices and motives of characters portrayed in oral, print and other media texts provide insight into those of self and others</li> <li>identify and discuss theme and point of view in oral, print and other media texts</li> <li>discuss and explain various interpretations of the same oral, print or other media text</li> </ul> <p>Appreciate the artistry of texts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>discuss character development in terms of consistency of behaviour and plausibility of change</li> </ul>
<p><b>2.3 Understand Forms, Elements and Techniques</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>evaluate the effectiveness of oral, print and other media texts, considering the believability of plot and setting, the credibility of characters, and the development and resolution of conflict</li> </ul>
<p><b>General Outcome 4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will listen, speak, read, write, view and represent to enhance the clarity and artistry of communication</li> </ul>
<p><b>4.1 Enhance and Improve</b></p> <p><b>Expand knowledge of language</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>explore the derivation and use of words, phrases and jargon, including variations in language, accent and dialect in Canadian communities and regions</li> </ul>

#### IV. Materials:

Copies of the following materials can be accessed through directly through embedded electronic links within this lesson or within it as hard copies..

- a copy of the story, "Thank You Ma'am" by Langston Hughes (one copy per student): <http://www.amlit.com/Hughes/SS/ThankYouMam.html>.
- Rubric for Assessing Journal Prompt Responses
- Interactive Reading
- Questions found in the Extensions and Variations section
- Content Quiz
- Discussion Questions
- Socratic Seminar discussion questions

## V. Procedure:

### i). 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](#).” found in the "Assessment" section.

## Alternate 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.
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.

### ii). 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?*

### iii). 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?

## VI. Extensions and Variations:

Part one of this lesson could be completed in one class period. 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 period or could be assigned as homework.

### i). 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?

## ii). 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)

## iii). 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*.

## VII. Teacher Notes or References:

**Socratic Seminar** is an open-forum style discussion in which the teacher 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: <http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/schools/wjhs/depts/socialst/ams/Skills/SocraticSeminar/SocraticSeminarIntro>



## VIII. Assessment Ideas:

- 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”.
  - What time was it when Roger and Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones met? (Late at night, 11 p.m.)
  - What does she do for a living? (Hair dresser in a hotel beauty shop)
  - Where does Luella Jones take Roger? (To her home)
  - What is the first thing she has him do? (Wash his face)
  - What do they eat? (Lima beans and ham, a small cake)
  - 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.

## IX. Source:

- Lesson idea adapted with permission from the Institute of Character Education:  
<http://charactered.ocde.us>

## Thank You, M'am

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 so, 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 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.

"I'm very sorry, lady, I'm sorry," whispered the boy.

"Um-hum! And 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 though 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-nelson 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 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 pockekbook."

"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 a while 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 other eye, if she wanted to. He did not trust the woman not to 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 her."

"That will be fine," said the boy.

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, red-heads, and Spanish. 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 pocketbook nor nobody else's—because shoes come be devilish like that will burn your feet. I got to get my rest now. But I wish you would behave yourself, son, from here on in."

She led him down the hall to the front door and opened it. "Goodnight!" Behave yourself, boy!" she said, looking out into the street.

The boy wanted to say something else other than "Thank you, m'am" to Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones, but he couldn't do so as he turned at the barren stoop and looked back at the large woman in the door. He barely managed to say "Thank you" before she shut the door. And he never saw her again.