

THANK
YOU,
M'AM



LANGSTON
HUGHES



Name:

Period:

“Thank You, Ma’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 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 sifter. 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 hef?"

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

Name: _____

Date: _____ Class: _____

→ Use this space to ANNOTATE the text. Include your questions, comments, connections, and predictions. ↓

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 tall 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! May be 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 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 here."

"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 got by devilish ways 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, ma'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 back at the large woman in the door. Then she shut the door.

Character Analysis from "Thank You, Ma'am"

Character : _____

Evidence from Text	Page & Paragraph Number
Words	
Actions	
Appearance	
Thoughts	
Effects on Other People	
Direct Characterization	
Summary of Analysis of Character	

CONFLICT	INTERNAL OR EXTERNAL	EXPLANATION
A teenager stole Mrs. Jones' pocketbook.	EXTERNAL	Mrs. Jones is struggling against another human, Roger
Roger is captured by Mrs. Jones, who won't set him loose.		
Roger has nobody home at his house.		
Roger wants a pair of blue suede shoes.		
Roger does not want to be mistrusted after he tried to steal Mrs. Jones's purse and she was so kind to him.		
Roger wants to say "thank you" but can't get the words out.		

Name: _____

Date: _____

Directions: Use the text "Thank You Ma'am" to answer the questions below

(RL.2) What does Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones' reaction to the boy snatching her purse reveal about her character?

Restate the Question: _____

Evidence: _____

Explanation: _____

(RC.1, RL.2) Use evidence from the text to support that claim that Mrs. Jones was a strong and intimidating woman.

Evidence: _____

Defense: _____

(RL.2) Which of the following sums up Mrs. Jones personality?

- a. Firm, but nurturing
- b. Brave, but stubborn
- c. Hopeful, but annoyed
- d. Forgiving, but disrespectful

Evidence: _____

(RL.4) What do you think Mrs. Jones means when she says, "When I get through with you, sir, you are going to remember Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones."

(RL.1) What can we infer about Roger's life based on what he shares with Mrs. Jones?

(RL.3) Describe Mrs. Jones and the way she treats Roger. Describe Roger and the way he responds to Mrs. Jones.

(RL.2) When Mrs. Jones goes behind the screen, she doesn't keep an eye on the boy. What is her motivation for not watching him?

- a. She wants him to take her money.
- b. She wants to show him trust
- c. She left her purse in the other room.
- d. She locked the door.

(RL.2) How does Roger's encounter with Mrs. Jones change him? What do you think sparks the change? Use evidence from the text to explain your response.

Restate the Question: _____

Evidence: _____

Defense: _____

Which of the following details BEST supports one of the themes in "Thank You Ma'am"?

- a. "I have done things, too, which I would not tell you, son—neither tell God, if He didn't already know. Everybody's got something in common."
- b. "Well, you didn't have to snatch my pocketbook to get some suede shoes," said Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones.
- c. "You thought I was going to say, but I didn't snatch people's pocketbooks. Well, I wasn't going to say that."
- d. Behave yourself, boy!" she said, looking out into the street as he went down the steps.

What is one of the themes: _____

RACE to Get Your Answers Right!

- R**- RESTATE THE QUESTION
- A**-ANSWER THE QUESTION
- C**- CITE EVIDENCE (SHOW YOUR WORK)
- E**- EXPLAIN YOUR REASONING

WHICH CHARACTER IN THE NOVEL SWINDLE HAD THE MOST IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE HEIST?

RESTATE THE QUESTION:

ANSWER THE QUESTION:

CITE EVIDENCE:

EXPLAIN YOUR REASONING: