**Introduction**

In this lesson, students read and discuss pages 182–187 of “The Palace Thief” by Ethan Canin (from “And so I was preparing to end my days” to “Should I have spoken up to the senator?”), in which Hundert enters retirement and agrees to facilitate a rematch of the “Mr. Julius Caesar” competition. Students analyze how Hundert’s reaction to his retirement develops his character. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: What does Hundert’s reaction to his retirement suggest about his character?

For homework, students continue to read their Accountable Independent Reading (AIR) through the lens of focus standard RL.9-10.3 or RI.9-10.3. Additionally, students read pages 187–191 of “The Palace Thief” and use the Central Ideas Tracking Tool to trace the development of central ideas. Students also box unfamiliar words and look up their definitions.

**Standards**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessed Standard(s)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RL.9-10.3</td>
<td>Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Addressed Standard(s)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W.9-10.9.a</td>
<td>Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Apply grades 9–10 Reading standards to literature (e.g., “Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work [e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare]”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.9-10.5</td>
<td>Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessment

Assessment(s)

Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson. Students respond to the following prompt, citing textual evidence to support analysis and inferences drawn from the text.

- What does Hundert’s reaction to his retirement suggest about his character?

High Performance Response(s)

A High Performance Response should:

- Identify how Hundert reacts to his retirement (e.g., Hundert is offended by Ellerby’s farewell speech; Hundert agrees to Sedgewick’s proposition to host a “Mr. Julius Caesar” reunion; Hundert feels a lack of purpose; Hundert becomes obsessed with his decisions surrounding the first “Mr. Julius Caesar” competition).

- Analyze what Hundert’s reaction to his retirement suggests about his character (e.g., Although Hundert states that he “set about charting a new life for [him]self” in retirement (p. 186), he feels a lack of purpose and struggles to make the transition from St. Benedict’s to his new life. In the days before his retirement, Hundert worries about this transition and “tried not to think about [his] future” (p. 184). Once retired, Hundert feels confused about his identity outside of St. Benedict’s and struggles to find a purpose. He recalls, “Passing my reflection in the hallway mirror on my way down to dinner, I would think to myself, Is that you?, and on the way back up to my room, What now?” (p. 186). In order to distract himself, he throws himself into preparation for the “Mr. Julius Caesar” reunion competition. He states, “I pored again and again over my old notes,” but he begins to feel a sense of “dread” as old conflicts and fears resurface (p. 186). He becomes obsessed with the idea that Sedgewick has “forgotten about the event” (p. 186) or is “mock[ing]” (p. 187) him in order to get revenge for a decades-old “childhood slight” (p. 183). Hundert remembers his doubts about the morality of his choice to cheat on Sedgewick’s behalf, indicating that he is unable to move on from the past.).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)

- maturation (n.) – the process of developing in the body or mind
- meretriciousness (n.) – quality of being based on pretense, deception, or insincerity

Vocabulary to teach (may include direct word work and/ or questions)

- None.
Additional vocabulary to support English Language Learners (to provide directly)

- slight (n.) – insult or rejection
- tenure (n.) – the amount of time that a person holds a job, office, or title

Lesson Agenda/Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student-Facing Agenda</th>
<th>% of Lesson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standards &amp; Text:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Standards: RL.9-10.3, W.9-10.9.a, L.9-10.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Text: “The Palace Thief” from <em>The Palace Thief</em> by Ethan Canin, pages 182–187</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learning Sequence:

1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda
2. Homework Accountability
3. Masterful Reading
4. Reading and Discussion
5. Quick Write
6. Closing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Student copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist (refer to 10.1.1 Lesson 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Student copies of the Central Ideas Tracking Tool (refer to 10.1.2 Lesson 2)—students may need additional blank copies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learning Sequence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How to Use the Learning Sequence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Symbol</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no symbol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bold text indicates questions for the teacher to ask students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Italicized text indicates a vocabulary word.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▼</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⇐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activity 1: Introduction of Lesson Agenda  5%

Begin by reviewing the agenda and the assessed standard for this lesson: RL.9-10.3. In this lesson, students consider how Hundert’s reaction to his retirement develops his character.

- Students look at the agenda.

Activity 2: Homework Accountability  10%

Instruct students to talk in pairs about how they applied focus standard RL.9-10.3 or RI.9-10.3 to their AIR text. Lead a brief share out on the previous lesson’s AIR homework assignment. Select several students (or student pairs) to explain how they applied the focus standard to their AIR text.

- Students (or student pairs) discuss how they applied the focus standard to their AIR text from the previous lesson’s homework.

Instruct student pairs to share and discuss the vocabulary words they identified in the previous lesson’s homework.

- Students may identify the following words: maturation, meretriciousness.

Differentiation Consideration: Students may also identify the following words: slight, tenure.

Definitions are provided in the Vocabulary box in this lesson.

Activity 3: Masterful Reading  15%

Have students listen to a masterful reading of pages 182–187 from “The Palace Thief” (from “And so I was preparing to end my days” to “Should I have spoken up to the senator?”).

- Consider pausing several times during the masterful reading to allow students time to write down initial reactions and questions.
  - Students follow along, reading silently.

Differentiation Consideration: Consider posting or projecting the following guiding question to support students in their reading throughout this lesson:

How does Hundert react to his retirement?
Activity 4: Reading and Discussion  55%

Instruct students to form small groups. Post or project each set of questions below for students to discuss. Instruct students to annotate for character development throughout the reading and discussion, using the code CD.

1️⃣ This focused annotation supports students’ engagement with W.9-10.9.a, which addresses the use of textual evidence in writing.

Instruct student groups to read pages 182–183 (from “And so I was preparing to end my days” to “That evening I began to prepare my test”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

To what does Hundert attribute Sedgewick’s lack of rancor? What might Hundert’s interpretation suggest about how he views Sedgewick?

- Hundert believes that Sedgewick’s kind letter is a result of his “maturation” (p. 182). This suggests that he believes Sedgewick has outgrown his childish “rancor,” or bitterness, towards Hundert (p. 182), and changed for the better since he was a student at St. Benedict’s.

How does the word “artfully” in Hundert’s description of Sedgewick’s greeting as “artfully guileless,” (p. 182) relate to the tone of Sedgewick’s letter?

- Guileless means sincere or honest, but “artfully” suggests that this sincerity is fake (p. 182). This description calls into question the sincerity of Sedgewick’s initial letter, since Sedgewick’s voice on the phone suggests that he is pretending to be honest or sincere.

1️⃣ Consider drawing students’ attention to their application of L.9-10.5 through the process of demonstrating understanding of nuances in word meanings.

What do Sedgewick’s letter and his “artfully guileless” (p. 182) greeting suggest about Sedgewick as an adult?

- Perhaps Sedgewick has not changed as much as Hundert initially believes he has. Hundert is struck by the similarity between Sedgewick’s “artfully guileless” greeting and his first encounter with Sedgewick’s father “some forty years before” (p. 182), suggesting that Sedgewick has grown up to be very much like his father, who Hundert once described as “likeable” (p. 162), but also hinted that his likeability was carefully cultivated.

To what does Hundert attribute Sedgewick’s desire to stage a second “Mr. Julius Caesar” competition? What does this suggest about how Hundert understands Sedgewick?

- Student responses should include:
Hundert believes that Sedgewick wants to stage a reunion competition because he is still driven by the “childhood slight” of losing the original competition (p. 183). Although he is a successful businessman, he still needs to fill a void to “reclaim his intellectual honor” (p. 183).

Hundert’s reflects that “it is precisely this sort of childhood slight that will drive a great figure” (p. 183), suggesting that he believes that Sedgewick’s current success as a businessman is driven by the feelings of rejection and regret he experienced in high school because he lost the “Mr. Julius Caesar” competition.

**What motivates Hundert to accept Sedgewick’s proposal?**

- **Student responses may include:**
  - Hundert accepts Sedgewick’s proposal because he is “flattered” by the belief that the “Mr. Julius Caesar” competition, and by extension his teaching, had such a lasting impact on Sedgewick’s life (p. 183).
  - Hundert accepts Sedgewick’s proposal because Sedgewick offers him a “good sum of money” (p. 183), which he needs because he is entering retirement.
  - Hundert accepts Sedgewick’s proposal because Sedgewick offers to donate a lot of money to St. Benedict’s “Annual Fund,” and despite the unpleasant circumstances of his retirement, Hundert still feels a “deep loyalty to the school” (p. 183).

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Instruct student groups to read pages 183–187 (from “As assistant headmaster I had not taught my beloved Roman history” to “Should I have spoken up to the senator?”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

**How do Hundert’s “spirits [] take[] a beating” (p. 186) in pages 183–186?**

- **Student responses may include:**
  - Hundert’s “spirits [] take[] a beating” because he leaves St. Benedict’s on bad terms. He is offended by Ellerby’s “nostalgic rendering” (p. 184) of his career at the graduation ceremony because he holds Ellerby responsible for forcing him into retirement. Hundert demonstrates this anger by skipping the headmaster’s reception, but afterwards regrets this decision because “to have missed it, the very last one of my career, was a far more grievous blow to me than to Charles Ellerby” (p. 185).
  - Hundert’s “spirits [] take[] a beating” because he has been forced into retirement and has to leave St. Benedict’s school, a place which has been his home for many years. Hundert’s reflection that his only possessions are his “files and books” (p. 185) suggests that teaching
has been his whole life, and that there is very little that he finds important outside of St. Benedict's.

- Hundert’s “spirits [] take[] a beating” because he is faced with the difficult prospect of “charting a new life for [himself]” at “sixty-eight years old” (p. 186), and feels unsure about his identity and purpose in life. Hundert recalls, “Passing my reflection in the hallway mirror on my way down to dinner, I would think to myself, _Is that you?_, and on the way back up to my room, _What now?_” (p. 186). This reflection suggests that Hundert struggles to recognize himself outside of the context of St. Benedict’s.

**What effect does the anticipation of the “Mr. Julius Caesar” reunion competition have on Hundert over the course of the summer?**

- Student responses may include:
  - Hundert’s states, “Fortunately, there was the event to prepare for, as I fear that without it, those first days and nights would have been unbearable” (p. 186), suggesting that he initially finds the anticipation of the “Mr. Julius Caesar” competition to be a welcome distraction from the difficulty of his retirement.
  - As the summer progresses and the anticipation mounts, Hundert reflects that “a certain dread began to form in [his] mind” (p. 186). The wait for the competition resurfaces old conflicts about Sedgewick for Hundert. He fears Sedgewick may have “forgotten about the event” (p. 186) or even proposed the idea “just to mock [him]” (p. 187).
  - As he waits for the “Mr. Julius Caesar” competition, Hundert starts to question decisions he made more than 30 years ago, specifically decisions surrounding the first “Mr. Julius Caesar” competition. He wonders, “Should I never even have leapfrogged another boy to get him there? Should I have spoken up to the senator?” (p. 187). He is nervous about the future and cannot stop thinking about the past.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

**Activity 5: Quick Write**

Instruct students to respond briefly in writing to the following prompt:

**What does Hundert’s reaction to his retirement suggest about his character?**

Ask students to use this lesson’s vocabulary wherever possible in their written responses. Remind students to use the Short Response Rubric and Checklist to guide their written responses.

- Students listen and read the Quick Write prompt.

1 Display the prompt for students to see, or provide the prompt in hard copy.
Transition to the independent Quick Write.

- Students independently answer the prompt using evidence from the text.
- See the High Performance Response at the beginning of this lesson.

### Activity 6: Closing

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, students should continue to read their AIR texts through the lens of focus standard RL.9-10.3 or RI.9-10.3 and prepare for a 3–5 minute discussion of their texts based on that standard.

Also for homework, instruct students to read pages 187–191 of “The Palace Thief” (from "In early July, however, Sedgewick Bell’s secretary” to “the first rounds of questions were called from memory”). Instruct students to use the Central Ideas Tracking Tool to trace the development of central ideas in the text. Also, instruct students box any unfamiliar words and look up their definitions, choosing the definition that makes the most sense in context and writing a brief definition above or near the word in the text.

- Students follow along.

### Homework

Continue reading your Accountable Independent Reading text through the lens of focus standard RL.9-10.3 or RI.9-10.3 and prepare for a 3–5 minute discussion of your text based on that standard.

Also, read pages 187–191 of “The Palace Thief” (from "In early July, however, Sedgewick Bell’s secretary” to “the first rounds of questions were called from memory”). Use the Central Ideas Tracking Tool to trace the development of central ideas in the text. Additionally, box any unfamiliar words and look up their definitions. Choose the definition that makes the most sense in context and write a brief definition above or near the word in the text.