

9.4.1

Lesson 8

Introduction

In this lesson, students build their close reading skills and explore word choice as they analyze “The Overseer” (pp. 57–63) chapter from *Sugar Changed the World*. This section of text provides detailed accounts of the horrors of slave punishment, and contrasts the lifestyle of slaves and masters.

Students engage in an evidence-based discussion to explore specific words and phrases used in the text and how this language impacts the authors’ ideas in *Sugar Changed the World*. This analysis includes looking at two sections of text in-depth to facilitate collaborative discussion. Students complete a written response to the following prompt to close the lesson: How are the authors’ ideas developed by particular sentences in this section of the text?

For homework, students read “Back in Europe” (pp. 63–64) and “The Best Sort of Chaw” (pp. 64–69) and respond to two prompts. Students also continue to add to the Mapping Sugar Tool.

Standards

Assessed Standard(s)	
RI.9-10.5	Analyze in detail how an author’s ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter).
Addressed Standard(s)	
None.	

Assessment

Assessment(s)
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are the authors’ ideas developed by particular sentences in this section of the text?
High Performance Response(s)

A High Performance Response should:

- Identify how the idea of globalization is developed in this section of the text, including details that demonstrate how slave owners were physically and mentally removed from the everyday life of the plantations. Examples: plantation owners “hardly used [the Great Houses]” (p. 58); “For as soon as a sugar planter made enough money, he took his family and moved back to Europe” (p. 58); “While the masters enjoyed the life of wealth in Europe, the daily routine of the plantation was left in the hands of the overseers” (p.58).
- Describe how the absence of plantation owners perpetuated cruel treatment of slaves by overseers and cite evidence in the text. Examples: “the slaves who worked for him would never risk either fighting against him or running away” (p. 57); “people feared his cruelty more than they craved freedom” (p. 57); the use of the word “Hell” in the paragraph that starts “Sugar plantations were Hell” (p. 61).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)

- verandahs (n.) – large porches, usually roofed and partly enclosed, as by a railing, often extending across the front and sides of a house
- propaganda (n.) – information, ideas, or rumors deliberately spread widely to help or harm a person, group, movement, institution, nation, etc.

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

- curious (adj.) – strange, unusual, or unexpected

- ① The vocabulary in this lesson’s text is accessible at grade level. Students should work to analyze the figurative and connotative meanings of words in the text, such as the authors’ use of “bounds of humanity” (p. 59) and “absolute power” (p. 61), rather than determining vocabulary definitions.

Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
<p>Standards & Text:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard: RI.9-10.5 Text: <i>Sugar Changed the World</i>, “The Overseer” from “Thomas Thistlewood was twenty-nine” to “all this abuse was for one purpose: to produce ‘white gold’” (pp. 57–63). <p>Learning Sequence:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of Lesson Agenda Homework Accountability Reading and Discussion Quick Write Closing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5% 10% 70% 10% 5%

Materials

- Student copies of Mapping Sugar Tool (refer to 9.4.1 Lesson 1)
- Student copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist for each student (refer to 9.4.1 Lesson 1)

Learning Sequence

How to Use the Learning Sequence	
Symbol	Type of Text & Interpretation of the Symbol
10%	Percentage indicates the percentage of lesson time each activity should take.
no symbol	Plain text indicates teacher action.
	Bold text indicates questions for the teacher to ask students.
	<i>Italicized text indicates a vocabulary word.</i>
▶	Indicates student action(s).
☞	Indicates possible student response(s) to teacher questions.
ⓘ	Indicates instructional notes for the teacher.

Activity 1: Introduction of Lesson Agenda

5%

Begin by reviewing the agenda and the assessed standard for this lesson: RI.9-10.5. In this lesson, students read “The Overseer” (pp. 57–63) from *Sugar Changed the World*. Students discuss particular words and phrases in the text and consider their impact on the tone of the passage.

- ▶ Students follow along.

Activity 2: Homework Accountability

10%

Instruct students to talk in pairs about how they applied their focus standard to their Accountable Independent Reading 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 their focus standard to their AIR text.

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

Activity 3: Reading and Discussion

70%

Instruct students to form pairs. Post or project each set of questions below for students to discuss in pairs.

Instruct student pairs to read “The Overseer” from “Thomas Thistlewood was twenty-nine when he arrived in Jamaica in 1750” to “But even that was not the worst of it” (pp. 57–59).

- ① If necessary to support comprehension and fluency, consider using a masterful reading of the focus excerpt for the lesson.

How do the population statistics of Jamaica support the authors’ statement that Thistlewood “needed to be sure people feared his cruelty more than they craved freedom” (p. 57)?

- 🗨 Student responses should include:
 - These details were included to help inform the approach that people like Thistlewood adopted as overseers. People who were considered white who lived in Jamaica were outnumbered by slaves. There were “17,000 people...considered white,” “7,000... ‘free blacks’ or ‘colored’” and “the rest of the population, some 170,000 people, were enslaved workers” (p. 57). With such a difference in numbers, overseers had to maintain control; Thistlewood needed to “be so terrifying that the slaves who worked for him would never risk either fighting against him or running away” (p. 57).

- The authors wanted to call attention to Thistlewood’s motivations as an overseer. Thistlewood “needed” to rely on cruelty to maintain control over the slaves because he was outnumbered.

Provide students with the following definition: *verandah* means “large porches, usually roofed, and partly enclosed, as by a railing, often extending across the front and sides of a house.”

- ▶ Students write the definition of *verandah* on their copy of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

Instruct students to look at the language in the first two paragraphs on page 58 and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

Describe the tone of these two paragraphs. What words or phrases create the tone?

🗨 Student response should include:

- Details like “tropical breezes,” “pleasant,” “flitting,” “comforts,” etc., all create a relaxed tone, and show how enjoyable life must have been for the masters in the Great House.
- *Verandahs* are another place where overseers can relax and be comfortable.

What ideas do the authors convey through the use of this tone?

- 🗨 The luxury of the owners’ lives contrasts with the harshness of slave conditions and contributes not only to the idea that slaves were suffering, but also that they suffered while their masters thrived. The slaves were treated this way because masters saw them as part of a process, not as humans.

How does this tone change in the fourth paragraph, beginning with “Thistlewood learned”? What words and phrases contribute to this shift in tone?

- 🗨 The tone becomes frightening and heavy. The author uses words like “terror” and “whip” and phrases like “That kind of cruelty was the norm” and “beyond all bounds of humanity.”

What is the impact of the authors’ describing the beauty of the Great House and, immediately afterward, the actions of the Overseer?

- 🗨 The author creates a sense of horror for the reader of the inhumanity of the situation, in which white people in power could sit on a verandah and tolerate the beating and “pickling” of the slaves.

What may the authors be suggesting by referring to the lives of the sugar masters as “curious?”

- 🗨 *Curious* here may mean “unusual, strange, or unexpected.” It seems like the masters would do the “overseeing” of their work and plantations, but it seemed like they did not like to be close to what the work entailed.

- ① Consider confirming with students the definition of *curious* in this context: “strange, unusual, or unexpected.”

How do the masters benefit by moving their families back overseas?

- 🗨️ Student responses should include:
- The masters do not have to witness the horror of the work.
 - The masters can leave the unpleasantness to the overseers.
 - The masters still collect the money.

How do the “curious lives led by the sugar masters” (p. 57) connect to ideas and details developed in “Portrait Gallery of Sugar Work”?

- 🗨️ Student responses should include that the “curious” (p. 57) distance between masters and slaves is similar to ideas developed in “Portrait Gallery of Sugar Work.”
- In “Portrait Gallery of Sugar Work,” the children’s book highlights how sugar as a product goes through many processes that include dangerous and difficult human labor, yet by the time it ends up in stores, it’s in a familiar shape that people want to buy. “The Overseer” goes into great detail to depict just how horrible the conditions are that are fairly glossed over in “The Land of the Sugar Cane.” Where the children’s book describes “peril, pinch[es], and scrape[s]” (p. 47), “The Overseer” describes “pickling” (p. 59).

How do specific words or sentences in the text reflect or contradict the point of view presented in the images and captions?

- 🗨️ Student responses should include:
- The image on p. 57 seems aligned with the description on p. 58. Both caption and text describe the “breeze[s]” afforded to the Great Houses. The fact that “breeze” is the repeated word is significant when contrasted with a slaved being “exposed...naked to the flies all day” (p. 59).
 - The image on p. 59 is grossly contradicted by everything that has been discussed about slave conditions up to this point. The image looks nothing like what one would imagine as “beyond all bounds of humanity” (p. 59). The caption with the image helps to explain why the image is what it is; the slaves’ living conditions are portrayed this way because the image comes from a pro-slavery book.
 - The caption on p. 59 does accurately reference the idea about masters “hop[ing] not to use” their Great Houses. This supports the idea that successful and rich plantation owners got to move away from their plantation, their product, and their slaves.

- ① Consider providing students with the definition for *propaganda*, which means “information, ideas, or rumors deliberately spread widely to help or harm a person, group, movement, institution, nation, etc.”
- ① Explain to students that *propaganda* can exist on both sides of an issue and that it can come in many different forms (images, text, etc).
 - ▶ Students write the definition of *propaganda* on their copy of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

How could the image on p. 59 be considered propaganda?

- 🗨 Student responses should include:
 - This image does not portray the same conditions that are described on pp. 58–59. The caption indicates that it “appeared in a book defending slavery,” so the conditions do not look too bad. The space is “clean, neat, and calm” (p. 59). The artist is trying to convince people that slavery is not that bad.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Instruct student pairs to read the quote from p. 61: “The English historian Lord Acton famously said, ‘Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.’”

What is the meaning of this quote? How does this quote apply to what you have read thus far today?

- 🗨 The Overseer’s use of punishment with the slaves, being given absolute power by the plantation owner.

Ask students to read the remainder of “The Overseer” as a class. Ask students, as they read, to note how the Lord Acton quotation relates to the remainder of the text.

- ① Make sure to pause and view the image on p. 60, as well as read the caption.
- ① If necessary to support comprehension and fluency, consider using a masterful reading of the focus excerpt for the lesson.

Based on the caption, what kind of propaganda might the image on p. 60 be used for?

- 🗨 This is an anti-slavery propaganda image, which is evident in the caption that describes the master as “pale and bloodless, as if he were more a wraith or vampire than a person” while the slave “looks like a recognizable human being” (p. 60).

Direct the students to the second full paragraph on p. 61.

What rhetorical devices and word choices do the authors use, and for what purpose in this paragraph?

🗨 Student responses may include:

- The parallel structure of “They were hell” creates a repetition that forces the reader to confront the list of terrible realities that those living on the plantation had to face.
- Phrases like “endless labor,” “acted like creatures we would otherwise meet only in nightmares,” “overseers were treated like gods—which turned them into devils,” and “they preferred to kill their slaves rather than fear them” all contribute to the tone of fear and danger.
- The purpose of this description of limitless cruelty is to develop the idea of too much power being able to spiral a master out of control, “like creatures we would otherwise only meet in nightmares” (p. 61).

How do the statistics in the final two paragraphs of “The Overseer” (pp. 61–63) help support the ideas developed in this section of text?

🗨 The slave conditions that most students think of “as a problem peculiar to the United States” (p. 61) is very different from the experience on the “sugar islands.” Ninety-six percent of slaves “went to the Caribbean, Brazil, and the rest of South America (pp. 61–63). While the other four percent of “the slave population in North America grew” (p. 63), slaves were dying on plantations elsewhere throughout the world, dropping from two million down to “only 670,000 at emancipation” (p. 63). “Sugar, with its demand for relentless labor, was a killer” (p. 63).

① Consider providing a side note on the board highlighting the statistics in this section (500,000→4,000,000 and beneath it, 2,000,000→670,000) and leading a brief whole class discussion about the meaning of the numbers.

Activity 4: Quick Write**10%**

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

How are the authors’ ideas developed by particular sentences in this section of the text?

Instruct students to look at their annotations to find evidence. 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 read the Quick Write prompt.

① Display the prompt for students to see, or provide the prompt in hard copy.

Transition students to the independent Quick Write.

- ▶ Students independently answer the prompt, using evidence from the text (including images and captions).
- 🗨 See the High Performance Response at the beginning of this lesson.

Activity 5: Closing

5%

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to read *Sugar Changed the World*, “Back in Europe” and “The Best Sort of Chaw” (pp. 63–69) and answer the following prompts:

Read “Back in Europe” (pp. 63–64). How do the authors further develop a central idea from previous sections in the text?

Read “The Best Sort of Chaw” (pp. 64–69). How did sugar transform how Europeans ate? What role did factories play in ushering this transformation?

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

Additionally, instruct students to continue adding notes to their Mapping Sugar Tool.

- ▶ Students follow along.

Homework

Read *Sugar Changed the World*, “Back in Europe” ” (pp. 63–64) and “The Best Sort of Chaw” (pp. 63–69) and answer the following prompts:

Read “Back in Europe” (pp. 63–64). How do the authors further develop a central idea from previous sections in the text?

Read “The Best Sort of Chaw” (pp. 64–69). How did sugar transform how Europeans ate? What role did factories play in ushering this transformation?

Use this lesson’s vocabulary wherever possible in your written responses.

Continue adding to your Mapping Sugar Tool.