

*Before Reading*

## Thank You, M'am

Short Story by Langston Hughes

# *Who sees the BEST in you?*

**KEY IDEA** Have you ever gone through a time when it seemed like you couldn't do anything right? If so, then you know how important it is to have someone have faith in you. When a friend, a family member, or a teacher believes you can do better, it can help you try harder instead of giving up. In "Thank You, M'am," a woman sees **potential**—or possibility—where others might see a problem.

**QUICKWRITE** Create a web of people you know who see the best in you. Then explain why you have included these people. In what ways do they show their belief in you?



## Literary Analysis: Conflict

There is no story without plot, and there is no plot without **conflict**. A story's plot centers on conflict, or the struggle between opposing forces.

- An **external conflict** is a character's struggle against an outside force. For example, a character may struggle against nature or against another character.

- An **internal conflict** takes place inside the character. For example, a character may struggle between wanting something and knowing that taking it is wrong.

Stories often contain more than one conflict. As you read "Thank You, M'am," look for examples of both types of conflict.

### Reading Skill: Make Inferences

When you make an **inference**, you use your reason and experience to guess at what a writer doesn't say directly. Combining clues in a passage with your own knowledge helps you understand what characters are feeling and thinking. As you read "Thank You, M'am," make inferences to better understand the characters. Record your inferences on a chart like the one shown.

Detail About Character	What I Infer
Mrs. Jones holds Roger but lets him stoop to pick up her purse.	Mrs. Jones is trying to decide whether to trust Roger.

## Vocabulary in Context

### Word List

barren frail mistrust presentable

The following words helped Langston Hughes write a story about a boy facing a serious conflict. To see how many words you already know, use them to complete the sentences.

1. Don't \_\_\_\_\_ him; he will keep his promise.
2. Because he was \_\_\_\_\_, the hard work tired him .
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ room was a source of loneliness.
4. He wanted to look \_\_\_\_\_ for the assembly.

Author Online



## Langston Hughes 1902–1967

### **A Fascinating Journey**

As a child being raised by his grandmother in Lawrence, Kansas, Langston Hughes began a lifelong exploration of literature and blues music. He later went to Columbia University, worked in hotels, and traveled the world as a cook's assistant on freighters. Hughes was first recognized as a poet while working as a busboy. He left his poems at a table where the poet Vachel Lindsay was dining. Lindsay promoted the young poet's work, and Hughes's career was launched. Langston Hughes went on to become an influential writer of the 20th century.

**The People's Poet** After being discovered, Hughes went on to write novels, short stories, and plays as well as poems. Hughes's work shows a special understanding of everyday people—people who may not be famous or rich but whose lives are inspiring and valuable nonetheless.

### ***Background***

**Harlem** “Thank You, M'am” takes place in Harlem, a section of New York City. In the early 1900s, Harlem attracted many African-American writers. The stimulating community had a deep influence on their work.