

**TEACHER READING GUIDE**

***I, Too***

written by Langston Hughes

**Essential Question:** How does the author’s development of a character’s perspective contribute to the reader’s understanding of the text?”

**BOOK SNAPSHOT**

Selected from Florida’s ELA B.E.S.T. Standards Sample Text List

**Text Type:** Poetry

**Genre:** Free Verse, Historical Fiction

**Themes/Topics:** Patriotism, Racism, Equality

**Lexile:** AD500L

**SKILLS ALIGNED WITH FLORIDA’S ELA B.E.S.T. STANDARDS**

**Word Work**

**ELA.5.F.1.4**

Read with appropriate prosody or expression.

**Vocabulary**

**ELA.5.V.1.1**

Use grade-level academic vocabulary. (Tier 2)

**Comprehension**

**ELA.5.R.1.3**

Describe how an author develops a character’s perspective.

**BUILDING BACKGROUND**

Share a photograph of Langston Hughes to build background around the author and the poem, “I, Too.”

- Langston Hughes wrote “I, Too” following his experience with attempting to gain passage aboard a ship from Italy back to the United States in 1924. He was repeatedly passed over for a place on board numerous ships while white sailors were welcomed aboard.
- Langston Hughes lived and wrote during the modernist period. See p. 167 of the B.E.S.T ELA Standards for more background information.

Help students explore a time they felt excluded; prompt them to reflect on how it made them feel. Guide students in making a personal connection with the author.

**STUDENT LEARNING TARGETS**

**Today I am:**  
analyzing a character’s thoughts, feelings, and attitudes about an experience.

**So that I can:**  
understand how an author develops a character’s perspective.

## WORD WORK – FLUENCY

**ELA.5.F.1.4: Read grade-level texts with accuracy, automaticity, and appropriate prosody or expression.**

- **Clarification 2: Appropriate prosody refers to pausing patterns during oral reading that reflect the punctuation and meaning of a text.**

To read with **prosody**, students must understand: phrasing, grouping words, syntax, and word order. The reader should be able to group words in a way that makes sense as they read.

Modeled and Echo Reading

- Model prosody by reading a section of the text aloud to students, demonstrating how printed words turn into expressive phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. The section could be a sentence, a paragraph, or a page.
- Ask students to follow the words from the text as they listen to the text being read aloud.
- Ask students to read the same section of the text aloud to a partner.
- Repeat with various sections of the text.

### Paired Text Suggestion

**Paired texts** are intentionally grouped around a common topic or theme and motivate students to make connections across texts, build critical thinking skills, and deepen their understanding of a text. Reading paired text allows students to build background knowledge, expand their vocabulary, and scaffold comprehension of a complex text.

The B.E.S.T. text “*I, Too*,” pairs well with the New Worlds Reading Initiative book *Testing the Ice: A True Story About Jackie Robinson* by Sharon Robinson to support the ELA B.E.S.T. benchmark **5.R.1.2 Theme**.

“*I, Too*,” and *Testing the Ice: A True Story About Jackie Robinson* offer opportunities to explore the development of similar themes across both literary texts.

## TALK ABOUT NEW AND INTERESTING WORDS

**ELA.5.V.1.1: Use grade-level academic vocabulary appropriately in speaking and writing.**

Tier 2 vocabulary words, paired with student-friendly definitions, can be used for explicit vocabulary instruction. It is important to provide background information and learning opportunities to help students make connections to the words. Examples of Tier 2 vocabulary words for this text are:



**strong** (line 7): Someone who is **strong** is confident, determined, and not upset by other people. Even though the speaker is sent to the kitchen when company comes, he grows **stronger** by eating well and laughing through the experience.



**dare** (line 11): **Dare** describes doing something that requires a lot of courage. In the poem, the speaker says soon, no one will **dare** send him to the kitchen.



**beautiful** (line 16): **Beautiful** describes someone or something that is very attractive or pleasing. The speaker states that people will soon see how **beautiful** he is and be ashamed.



**ashamed** (line 17): If someone is **ashamed**, they feel embarrassed or guilty because of something they did. The speaker believes people will be **ashamed** of how he was treated.

### Vocabulary Extension Activity

Words do not need to be completely unfamiliar to students in order to be considered for explicit instruction. Words can be selected to teach word relationships and aid students in making connections between familiar words and their synonyms. For example, *resilient* is a synonym for the word *strong* and can be explicitly taught to the students. Refer to p. 205 of the B.E.S.T. Standards for additional information on types of word relationships.

## READ FOR MEANING – CHARACTER’S PERSPECTIVE

- ELA.5.R.1.3: Describe how an author develops a character’s perspective in a literary text.
  - Clarification 1: The term perspective means “a particular attitude toward or way of regarding something.”



### Before:

The purpose of this read aloud is to explain how an author develops a character’s perspective in poetry. Students will examine the character’s attitude toward his experiences with racism in the poem “I, Too” by Langston Hughes.



### During:

**First Read:** Read the poem aloud to students. Ask students to listen for words and phrases that offer clues to the conflict the character faces and his attitude toward his experience.

**Second Read:** Recreate the graphic organizer below on the board or chart paper. As you read, conduct a think aloud for stanzas 1 and 2. Record text evidence that portrays the character’s perspective, and note the connection that students make to the evidence they are collecting.

<b>Character’s Perspective</b> <i>-how the character feels about the topic (opinions and beliefs)</i>	
You can identify the character’s perspective by looking at the ...	
<p><b>Problem/Conflict</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What challenge does the character face in this poem?</li> </ul> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stanza 1:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I, too, sing America. = The challenge is that the speaker wants to be included in American society.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Stanza 2:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am the darker brother. = The problem is what others think of the color of his skin.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Character’s Feelings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the conflict make the character feel?</li> </ul> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stanza 1:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I, too, sing America. = The speaker feels sad and upset.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Stanza 2:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing stronger = The speaker feels like he is growing stronger mentally and physically.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Character’s Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the character respond to the challenges he faces?</li> <li>• How do you know?</li> </ul> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• But I laugh. = The character responds to a negative situation with a positive attitude.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Language/Dialogue</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What powerful or vivid words does the author use to describe the problem, the characters’ feelings, and the character’s actions?</li> </ul> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>They</i> and <i>Company</i> = The speaker uses the words <i>they</i> and <i>company</i> to describe the problem. Both words describe a group of people.</li> <li>• <i>Kitchen</i> = The speaker was sent to the kitchen. This has a negative connotation. Why?</li> </ul>

Ask students to locate text evidence to support the character’s perspective for stanzas 3–5 using the guiding questions. Capture students’ thinking in the graphic organizer.

## READ FOR MEANING – CHARACTER’S PERSPECTIVE



### After:

Review the information recorded in the graphic organizer from the second read of “I, Too” and discuss the character’s perspective in the poem.

- Students will write a constructed response for the prompt using the Answer, Cite, Explain (ACE) writing strategy.
  - Suggested prompt:
    - **How do the speaker’s feelings and actions portray his perspective towards the challenges he faced?**
- Explain the ACE strategy for constructing a response to the prompt.
- Model and scaffold the ACE strategy as needed.

A	<p><b>Answer</b> the prompt.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use keywords from the question in your answer.</li><li>• This is your claim.</li></ul>
C	<p><b>Cite</b> evidence from the text that strongly supports your answer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use the author’s words in quotations.</li></ul> <p>Sentence Stems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In the second stanza, ...</li><li>• The author mentioned ...</li><li>• The text stated, “...”</li></ul>
E	<p><b>Explain</b> how the text supports your answer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Extend your response by explaining the connection between the information you cited and the answer.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make it clear you know the answer because of the evidence.</li></ul></li></ul> <p>Sentence Stems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• For example, ...</li><li>• From line _____, the reader learns/knows ...</li><li>• The author states in line _____ ...</li></ul> <p><i>Refer to the source and/or author by name and always include page, paragraph, and stanza numbers.</i></p>

- After reading and responding to the text, engage students in a discussion about how the main character’s perspective helped them understand the text.
- Suggested Questions:
  - What do you think the author, Langston Hughes, wants readers to learn from the character’s perspective and experiences?
  - How does knowing the character’s perspective help you understand the deeper meaning of the poem?
- Tie responses back to the essential question on page one of this guide.

### Best Standards Connection

The poem “I, Too” lends itself well to addressing additional B.E.S.T. standards such as:

- theme (R.1.2);
- figurative language (R.1.4, R.3.1);
- summarizing (R.3.2); and
- arguments, claims, and evidence (R.2.4).