

Thank You Ma'am Constructed Response Model

Prompt:

Write two paragraphs comparing how Roger behaves on the street with how he behaves after spending some time with Mrs. Jones. Explain why Mrs. Jones's belief in his potential helps Roger show his best self.

Model Response:

In the short story, "Thank You Ma'am" by Langston Hughes, the main character Roger changes from the beginning to the end of the story. In the beginning of the story, Roger tries to steal Mrs. Jones' pocketbook. He is untrustworthy and tries to escape Mrs. Jones after his failed robbery attempt. Hughes writes, "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" (1). When Mrs. Jones put him in a chokehold and questioned him about why he did this, he lied and said, "I didn't aim to" (1). This portrays Roger's character as being dishonest and cowardly.

After spending some time with Mrs. Jones, Roger has a transformation. When the opportunity for him to escape Mrs. Jones' house, he makes the conscience decision to stay. When Mrs. Jones finally lets Roger loose and tells him to go to the sink to wash his face, Hughes describes, "Roger looked at the door-looked at the woman- looked at the door- and went to the sink" (2). At this moment, the audience can infer that Roger wants the woman to trust him. It is obvious that Mrs. Jones' belief in Roger's potential helps show his best self. At the end of the story, Hughes explains, "The boy wanted to say something else other than 'Thank you m'am' to Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones" (3). Roger shows gratitude towards the woman and the audience can predict that he most likely will never steal again due to Mrs. Jones kind actions towards him.