

## **“Thank You, Ma’am” by Langston Hughes: Discussion Questions and Writing Assignment**

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Why do you think Mrs. Jones handles the situation the way she does in the story? What is she trying to accomplish? How do you think this experience is likely to affect Roger?
2. Why do you think Mrs. Jones makes a point of getting Roger to wash his face? Why does she give him food? Why does she tell him about her past? Why does she avoid asking him about his family or background?
3. Why do you think Roger decides he “[does] not want to be mistrusted”?
4. What does Mrs. Jones mean when she says that “shoes got by devilish ways will burn your feet”?
5. Why do you think Roger can’t say “thank you” to Mrs. Jones as he is leaving?
6. What themes does the story express? What does it suggest about some people who commit some crimes?

### **Writing Assignment:**

Try to put yourself “in the shoes” of someone like Roger—someone who does something bad but is not really a bad person. Why does this person do whatever bad thing he or she does? Write a short story about this character, and try to make the character sympathetic to the reader—in other words, create a character that the reader can understand and like despite his or her behavior. Imagine what this character would think and feel, and describe him or her in detail. Come up with a different character and situation from those described in “Thank You, Ma’am.”