

Defender

Thank you Ma'am

Theme of the story

The story begins with an encounter between Roger, a teenage boy & Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones, an older woman walking home from work late one night. He attempts steal her purse, but because it is so heavy, & Mrs. Jones is quite stout, he merely ends up breaking the strap instead. She kicks him & grabs him by the shirt, asking if he feels ashamed of himself. Roger admits that he does, Mrs. Jones notices that his face is dirty & his hair is uncombed, she asks if there is any one looking after him. when he answers 'no' she drags him home with her, saying when she's finished with him, he'll be sure never to forget

he met her.

When Roger & Mrs. Jones arrive at her house, she asks if he's had supper. She assumes that since he was trying to steal her purse he must be hungry. But learn that he wanted her money to buy a pair of blue suede shoes. Then Mrs. Jones tells Roger that he could've asked her for the money, he doesn't quite believe her. Mrs. Jones explains to Roger that she was young once, too & also couldn't afford things she wanted. She confides that, like the teenage boy, she used to do some pretty shameful things, too. While they eat, she refrains from embarrassing Roger by not asking him anything else about his life, instead she talks about her job in a hotel beauty shop, where she meets women with all different colors of hair.

At the end of the story, Mrs. Jones gives Roger ten dollars to buy the blue suede shoes & tells him not to steal her purse or anyone else's for that matter as shoes purchased with stolen money

cause more trouble than they're worth. When she leads him to the door & bids him good night, Roger wants to say something other than 'Thank you' madam, but nothing suitable comes to mind. As he turns to look at Mrs. Jones in the doorway, he can barely get the words, 'Thank you' out of his mouth before she shut the door. According to Hughes, Roger never sees her again.

Lionel
Parents