



Close reading plan

“The Bet” by Anton Chekov

Created by Katherine Brodaski, 2014 Connecticut Dream Team teacher

What makes this text complex?			
Text and Author	"The Bet" by Anton Chekov		Where to Access Text www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/Bet.shtml
Text Description			
Which is more humane – capital punishment or solitary confinement? At a dinner party, a young lawyer and a banker make a bet wagering two millions for fifteen years of the lawyer’s life. The night before the bet is to end, the lawyer paces in his study remembering the terms of the agreement and looking for a solution to end his problem. Chekov’s fictional short story uses flashback to inform the reader of the terms of the bet and the events of the last fifteen years since the bet was originally made. Succumbing to the power of greed, the banker resolves to kill the lawyer to avoid losing his fortune, but changes his mind after finding a letter written by the lawyer where he renounces “the stuff of the earth” and declares he will break the terms of the bet. Students will explore the value of human life, the humanity (or lack thereof) of life imprisonment, the power of greed, and question the motivation of the characters.			
Quantitative			
Lexile and Grade Level	990L – 10th		Text Length 2866 words
Qualitative			
Meaning/Central Ideas		Text Structure/Organization	
The central idea that human life is worth more than money is implicit in the lawyer’s letter, but may be difficult for students to infer. It can be implied through the lawyer’s letter and the banker’s reaction to his own actions at the end of the story. Students may more easily infer the idea that greed motivates man to commit horrible acts and can be inferred from the banker’s resolution to murder the lawyer. The idea that “To live anyhow is better than no life at all” is explicitly stated in the text as the lawyer’s argument in favor of life imprisonment over the death penalty.		The story contains several flashbacks that the author uses to provide the reader with information about how the bet came to be. Some versions are divided into two parts. In part one, students struggle understanding that the only action taking place is the banker pacing back and forth in his study. The struggle with understanding stems from the many flashbacks the author uses.	
Prior Knowledge Demands		Language Features	
It may be helpful for the students to understand that capital punishment is the death penalty.		The author uses many lengthy, compound-complex sentences. For instance, the following sentence is from the lawyer’s letter: “You would marvel if, owing to strange events of some sorts, frogs and lizards suddenly grew on apple and orange trees instead of fruit, or if roses began to smell like a sweating horse; so I marvel at you who exchange heaven for earth.” Because the story was written in 1889, the syntax of the sentences can be unfamiliar to the students.	
Vocabulary			
Tier Two Words (General academic vocabulary)		Tier Three Words (Domain-specific words)	
<i>“Words that are far more likely to appear in written texts than in speech. [They] often represent subtle or precise ways to say relatively simple things—saunter instead of walk, for example.” (CCSS ELA Appendix A)</i>		<i>“[Tier Three words]...are specific to a domain or field of study (lava, carburetor, legislature, circumference, aorta) and key to understanding a new concept within a text.” (CCSS ELA Appendix A)</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> humane frivolous caprice emaciated comely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> immoral trifle procured ethereal illusory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A priori Theology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capital punishment Gospel
Potential Reader/Task Challenges			

Students may possess prior knowledge of solitary confinement in the American prison system as portrayed in film. This may lead to confusion because the terms of the agreement between the banker and lawyer in “The Bet” are much more stringent.

Text-dependent questions		
Question	Standard alignment	Page of this document
Why did the banker and the lawyer make the bet? Use evidence from the text to support your response. RL 9-10.1	RL 9-10.1	5
By describing the bet as “wild” and “senseless”, what is the impact on the meaning of the text?	RL 9-10.4	8
How does the character of the banker change over the course of the story? RL 9-10.3	RL 9-10.3	11
How does the author’s choice of using flashback to provide the reader with information about the bet affect the text? RL 9-10.5	RL 9-10.5	14
How does the lawyer’s decision at the end of the story develop the central idea of the text? RL 9-10.2	RL 9-10.2	18
Target Standards		
<p>RL 9-10.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.</p> <p>RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.</p> <p>RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.</p> <p>RL 9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).</p> <p>RL.9-10.5 Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.</p>		

Question 1

Question #1	Why did the banker and the lawyer make the bet? Use evidence from the text to support your response.	
Standard(s) covered:	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. R.L. 9-10.1	
	Example response that meets standard	Look-fors
	<p>At a dinner party, the guests were discussing which punishment was more humane – capital punishment or imprisonment for life. The banker believed that “the death penalty is more moral and more humane than imprisonment for life” because of the time in which each punishment was carried out. In support of this belief, he stated, “Capital punishment kills a man at once, but lifelong imprisonment kills him slowly.” The banker’s main argument for the cruelty of imprisonment for life is that it “drags the life out of you in the course of many years.” However, the young lawyer disagreed with the banker. He believed that both punishments were “equally immoral” because they both “take away life,” but that imprisonment for life was the more favorable choice because “to live anyhow is better than not at all.” Spurred on by this disagreement, the banker and the young lawyer made the bet because the banker was trying to prove the lawyer could not last in solitary confinement, and the young lawyer was greedy for the banker’s money. The bet is the basis of the banker’s internal conflict which drives the plot of the story.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of the banker’s opinion of capital punishment versus imprisonment for life. • Evidence of the young lawyer’s opinion of capital punishment versus imprisonment for life. • Reasons for the banker and lawyer to make the bet • Connection of the bet to the plot as the basis for the conflict in the story
If students are struggling to answer the text-dependent question, use this follow-up plan for modeling and practice:		
Objective	In this lesson you will learn how to determine a character’s motivation by analyzing the author’s use of dialogue.	
Prior knowledge to review	Quote accurately from a text (RL.5.1), Cite textual evidence that strongly supports what the text says explicitly as well as what may be inferred (RL.6.1, RL.7.1, RL.8.1)	
Steps to achieve objective	Think aloud for direct instruction	

<p>1) Skim the text and note where the characters interact.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm going back to the text to look at the conversation between the lawyer and the banker because the question asks about why these two characters made the bet. • I see in the first paragraph, the banker who is hosting the party gives his opinion of the whether the death penalty is worse or whether life in prison is worse. He says, "The death penalty is more moral and more humane than imprisonment for life." Now I know that the banker favors the death penalty over life in prison. But where does the lawyer begin speaking? • Oh, okay. If I look in paragraph three, I can see that the author tells me explicitly what the lawyer's opinion is. He says, "The death sentence and the life sentence are equally immoral, but if I had to choose between the death penalty and imprisonment for life, I would certainly choose the second." I know this is the lawyer's opinion because it says, "When he was asked his opinion, he said," • So these two characters disagree in their opinions about the death penalty and life imprisonment.
<p>2) Reread and ask, "How do the characters respond to one another?"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since I know there is a disagreement about the death penalty and life in prison, I want to look at how the characters respond to one another. I want to make sure I look at the character's actions and the descriptions of the characters and not just focus on their words because the author has several ways of giving me information about characters. • In the 5th paragraph, it says the banker "was suddenly carried away by excitement." Sometimes when people are excited by a situation, they don't tend to look at the long-term effects. • I see in paragraph 10 that the author describes the banker as "spoilt and frivolous, with millions beyond his reckoning." So if the banker was "frivolous," that means he's not serious about anything. In the same paragraph (10), it also says the banker "made fun of the young man" during dinner which shows he's not taking the bet seriously. • More support that he may not be taking the bet seriously is when he taunts the lawyer during dinner, he says, "'you are losing three or four of the best years of your life. I say three or four, because you won't stay longer.'" So the banker never thinks the lawyer will stay for the entire time. • Now the lawyer changed the terms of the bet in paragraph 7. He changed it from five to fifteen years. • From the information in paragraph 3 where it describes the lawyer as "a young man of five-and-twenty," I know the lawyer is rather young, 25, so he may not be thinking about the long term effects of his decision. • Other than the banker's thoughts in paragraph 12 where he thinks the lawyer was motivated by "simple greed for money," we really don't know why the lawyer changed the terms. • We do know that both men are young and each wants to prove his argument is correct.
<p>3) Ask, "How does this interaction impact the plot?"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now I need to figure out how the banker and lawyer making the bet impacts the plot of the story. • I know neither character thought through the possible consequences of the bet because in paragraph 21 the banker states, "By our agreement I ought to pay him two million. If I do pay him, it is all over with me: I shall be utterly ruined." • The banker could not have known that when he made the bet that he would lose most of his money over the next fifteen years. • I know this because in paragraph 22 it says, "The one means of being saved from bankruptcy and disgrace is the death of that man!" This tells me that the banker plans on killing the lawyer to save his fortune which is the conflict of the story. • If the banker wants to kill to save his fortune, that means he is motivated by greed.

Extension and practice

- *Students can practice writing “Right There” questions based on this text (Questions where the answer is “right there” in the text) by exchanging the questions with another student. Then the other student has to find the exact quote to answer the question.
- Students can use a graphic organizer to chart the cause and effect relationships in the interactions between the characters.

What next?

For additional practice, with students or for students' independent work, apply this learning objective and set of steps to other literature to teach using strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. (R.L. 9-10.1)

See more examples of how to teach using strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. (R.L. 9-10.1)

Objective: In this lesson you will learn how to determine a character's motivation by analyzing the author's use of dialogue.

- 1) Skim the text and note where the characters interact.
- 2) Reread and ask, “How do the characters respond to one another?”
- 3) Ask, “How does this interaction impact the plot?”

[Close Reading Literature: “The Celebrated Jumping Frogs of Calaveras County”](#)
[Close Reading Informational Text: President Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address](#)

Question 2

Question #2	By describing the bet as “wild” and “senseless”, what is the impact on the meaning of the text?	
Standard(s) covered:	RL 9-10.4 - Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).	
	Example response that meets standard	Look-fors
	By describing the bet as “wild” and “senseless,” the reader understands the uselessness of the bet because it did not prove that “the death penalty was better or worse than imprisonment for life.” Caught up in the excitement of the evening, the banker entered into the bet on a whim staking two millions because it was nothing but a trifle to him. The banker’s caprice prevented him from considering the long-term implications of the bet making it a “wild” decision. The lawyer, who believed “to live anyhow is better than not at all,” was motivated by “simple greed for money.” Changing the terms of the bet from five years to fifteen years was a senseless act of the lawyer’s hubris.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correctly concludes that the actions of the two characters will not prove whether the death penalty is worse than imprisonment for life • Provides evidence from the text to support the ideas of the bet as “wild and senseless” Includes the connotation for the words “wild” and “senseless”
If students are struggling to answer the text-dependent question, use this follow-up plan for modeling and practice:		
Objective	In this lesson you will learn how to determine the impact of specific word choices by analyzing the connotation of those words.	
Prior knowledge to review	Determine connotative meanings – the connotation of a word is the implied meaning, including any feelings, positive or negative, associated with the word (RL.6.4)	
Steps to achieve objective	Think aloud for direct instruction	
1) Skim through the text to find where the author refers to the description in the question and reread.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know from the question that the words “wild and senseless” describe the bet so I’m going to look for the section of the text where the author talks about the bet. Ok, here it is in the tenth paragraph, “And this wild, senseless bet was carried out!” • Hmm... I wonder why the author used those two words – wild and senseless. 	

<p>2) Ask, "What do these words mean in this text?"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hmm, "wild." Well, I know that the word "wild" has multiple meanings. Animals that are wild would not make good pets because they can't be tamed, and places where people can't live are described as "wild." But that's not how "wild" is used in this text. • In this sentence, I think that "wild" means uncontrolled, but I need to check my guess against the text. In paragraph 7, the lawyer agrees to the bet, but changes the terms. He says, "I'll take the bet, but I would stay not five but fifteen years." Changing the terms in this way does seem uncontrolled. I also notice that there is also no evidence in the text of any of the other dinner party guests stepping in to prevent the bet from happening or get the banker and lawyer to think about the possible consequences of their actions. • Repeat process for "senseless" • So, to answer the question, "What do these words mean in the text?" We could say something that is wild doesn't really follow any kind of structure, and it's not civilized. And something that is senseless doesn't make sense. There's no real reason for it to happen and logic doesn't apply to it.
<p>3) Ask, "What do these words help me understand about the story?"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So now I'm going to go back into the text and look for other words that share connotations of wild and senseless. • Ok, I see the word "caprice" which I know means on a whim or without care. That reminds me of something being wild. • I also noticed that caprice is used to describe the banker's actions. The banker has no cares because he has so much money. • "Greed" is another word that reminds me of senseless because there's no real reason for it. The text says that the lawyer was motivated by greed, but then why did he change the terms of the bet? • Changing from 5 years to 15 years was not logical, so that action could also be described as senseless. • Maybe the words wild and senseless impact the meaning because not only does the bet itself not make sense, but the actions of the banker and lawyer don't have any logic to them. • Looking back at the text, I can see that the bet actually didn't prove anything which would make it a senseless bet.

Extension and practice

- Repeat the process to determine the impact of the word “despise” (paragraphs 35 and 37) on the meaning of the text.
- Place the students in groups. Give each group a piece of chart paper and have them make three columns: Positive/Negative/Neutral. Ask them to skim the text to locate words the author uses that have positive, negative, or neutral connotation and write the words on the chart paper in the appropriate column. Have students gallery walk the finished posters and compare and contrast their findings.

What next?

For additional practice, with students or for students' independent work, apply this learning objective and set of steps to other literature to teach the impact of word choice on the meaning of the text. (RL.9-10.4)

See more examples of how to determine the impact of the author's word choice on the meaning of the text. (RL.9-10.4)

Objective: In this lesson you will learn how to determine the impact of specific word choices by analyzing the connotation of those words.

- 1) Skim through the text to find where the author refers to the description in the question and reread.
- 2) Ask, “What do these words mean in this text?”
- 3) Ask, “What do these words help me understand about the story?”

[Close reading Literature: “A Pair of Silk Stockings”](#)

[Close reading Shakespeare: “Hamlet,” Act 3, Scene 1](#)

Question 3

Question #3	How does the character of the banker change over the course of the story?
Standard(s) covered:	RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

Example response that meets standard	Look-fors
<p>The banker is a dynamic character that changes over the course of the story. In the banker’s first flashback, when the he makes the bet with the lawyer, the author describes him as “spoilt and frivolous, with millions beyond his reckoning.” Because the banker had a lot of money and was very carefree, he was not thinking about the long term effects of the bet when it was made with the young lawyer. This is different from his thinking in the middle of the story when he is worried about having to pay the lawyer what he owes him for the bet. Instead of being carefree, as he was at the time of making the bet, he is pacing in his study and comes to the conclusion, “If I do pay him, it is all over with me: I shall be utterly ruined.” The banker’s frivolity is replaced by desperation in his plan to kill the lawyer to save himself from “bankruptcy and disgrace.” The banker decides not to carry out his plan after finding the letter from the lawyer “renounce[ing] the millions” and, upon returning to the house, weeps because he is filled with “contempt for himself.” The banker changes from a wealthy, carefree young man to a middle-class, self-loathing aged man.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies the banker’s character as “spoilt and frivolous” at the time the bet is made • Identifies the banker as desperate or motivated by greed when he plans to kill the lawyer • Identifies the banker as self-loathing or filled with contempt at the end of the story.

If students are struggling to answer the text-dependent question, use this follow-up plan for modeling and practice:

Objective	In this lesson you will learn how to analyze character change by tracking character development.
Prior knowledge to review	Compare and contrast – identify similarities and differences, analyze how lines of dialogue reveal aspects of a character and provoke a decision (RL.8.3)
Steps to achieve objective	Think aloud for direct instruction

<p>1) Locate examples of direct and indirect characterization of the character in the text.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since the question asks about the banker, I am going to look for information the author gives me about the banker, what the banker says, does, thinks, feels, and what others say or think about him. • The first line tells me that the banker was “walking up and down in his study.” I think this means that the banker was pacing back and forth. When people pace, it usually means they are thinking or upset about something. • In paragraph 10, the author describes the banker as “spoilt and frivolous, with millions beyond his reckoning” which shows me that the banker had a lot of money and was very carefree. • The question asks me how the character changes over the course of the story, so I should continue to look through the whole story to see if I can find more characterization. • I see in paragraph 21 the banker says, “If I do pay him, it is all over with me: I shall be utterly ruined.” This statement shows me that the banker is worried about his fortune. • Since the question says the whole story, I should keep looking all the way to the end to see if I can find any other changes. • In paragraph 38, it says the banker “felt so great a contempt for himself” which tells me he hates himself for his actions.
<p>2) Ask, “What is the sequence of character - development?”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now the question asks me how the character changes from the beginning of the story to the end of the story. • I know there are flashbacks in this story, so that means that the sequence of the events in the story may not be presented in the order that they actually happened in time. Let’s draw a timeline on the board to keep track of when these events occurred. • The first line happens in the present time. I know this because in paragraph 1 it says, “It was a dark autumn night” and the banker was “remembering how, fifteen years before.” Let’s put this information on our timeline, but we’ll leave space on each side of it. • If someone remembers something that means it has already happened, so the events following this statement have already happened. • The information from paragraph 10 is from the past. I know this because the sentences before talk about the two men making the bet. “Agreed! You stake your millions and I stake my freedom!” said the young man.” And the sentences after also talk about the dinner party the banker was remembering: “At supper he made fun of the young man.” Let’s add these to our timeline. [Add this information to your timeline before the banker pacing in his study.] • The information in paragraph 21 happened in the present. I know this because the sentence before this quotation shifts back to the present because it says, “The old banker remembered all this and thought:” Also, the quotation from paragraph 21 begins with “Tomorrow at twelve o’clock.” Let’s add this to our timeline. [Add the information from paragraph 21 to the timeline directly after the banker pacing.] • So I can tell that the information from paragraph 1 and paragraph 21 happen in the present. • The information from paragraph 38 also happened in the present, but after the information from paragraphs 1 and 21. I know this because the scene has changed to the lawyer’s lodge and the sentence following the quote begins with, “When he got home...” Therefore, this event happened later in the evening than the events in paragraphs 1 and 21. Let’s add this information to our timeline as well. [Add the information from the paragraph 38 to the timeline after the information from paragraph 21.]

<p>3) Ask, “How do the character’s actions from the beginning of the story compare to those at the end of the story?”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now I need to look at how the banker changes, so let’s compare the descriptions and actions that we have found. • This worrying from paragraph 21 is different from the carefree attitude the banker showed in paragraph 10, but similar to the pacing he did at the beginning of the story. • At the end of the story, the contempt the banker feels toward himself is different than the worrying and carefree attitudes described earlier. • If I look at my timeline, I can compare the banker’s actions from the beginning or how he originally felt and see how the banker changed over the course of the story. I see the banker started off as carefree and frivolous 15 years ago, became worried through the course of the bet, and ended up feeling contemptuous on the evening the bet concludes. He becomes worried as the bet progresses because he has lost so much money in the stock market over the years and paying the lawyer two millions for winning would ruin him. He feels contempt at the end of the bet because he realizes the senseless nature of his decision to murder the lawyer and comes to the realization that even though the lawyer still lives, his life has been lost because he is no longer sane.
---	--

Extension and practice

- Practice sequencing events in a story – Have the students cut apart the strips on page 20 with the events from the story written on them. Ask the students to organize the strips in two ways: 1.) The order in which they actually happened and 2.) The order in which they were presented in the story.
- Have students use a feature chart on page 21 to keep track of what the character says, does, thinks, and feels at the beginning, middle, and end of the story.

What next?

<p>For additional practice, with students or for students' independent work, apply this learning objective and set of steps to literature to teach how complex characters develop over the course of a text (RL.9-10.3)</p>	<p>See more examples of how to teach how complex characters develop over the course of a text (RL.9-10.3)</p>
---	---

<p>Objective: In this lesson you will learn how to analyze character change by comparing the character’s thoughts, statements, feelings and actions from the beginning of the story with those at the end of the story.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Locate examples of direct and indirect characterization of the character in the text 2. Ask, “What is the sequence of character-development?” 3. Ask, “How do the character’s actions from the beginning of the story compare to those at the end of the story?” 	<p>Close Reading Shakespeare: “The Tempest,” Act 1, Scene 2</p> <p>Close Reading Literature: “A Pair of Silk Stockings”</p> <p>Close Reading Literature: “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County”</p>
---	--

Question 4

Question #4	How does the author’s choice of using flashback affect the text?
Standard(s) covered:	RL.9-10.5 Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Example response that meets standard	Look-fors
<p>The author’s use of flashback creates a sense of tension throughout the bet, as well as a surprise ending. The flashback informs the reader of the circumstances leading up to the bet, the terms of the bet, and the lawyer’s activities in confinement during the years of the bet.</p> <p>In the beginning of the story, the only action is the banker pacing back and forth in his study remembering the night he made the bet with the lawyer fifteen years ago. The author repeats the phrases “walking up and down” and walking to and fro” to create a sense of building tension.</p> <p>By using the flashbacks to explain the premise of the bet, the author provides the reasons for the conflict (the banker attempts to murder the lawyer) which creates more tension and an explanation for the way the story is resolved. The banker is determined to murder the lawyer because he views murdering the lawyer as “the one means of being saved from bankruptcy and disgrace.” In the banker’s flashback in paragraphs 13–19, the reader learns of the lawyer’s reading, drinking, and playing the piano while in confinement. Knowing the topics of books he has read and combining this knowledge with his words from the letter he wrote to the banker, the reader understands the lawyer breaks the terms of the bet because he now knows a human life is worth more than money and, in paragraph 37, explains that he despises all that the banker lives by. Since the lawyer does not want the money, the banker does not kill him which is not how the reader expects the story to end.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain or describe the flashbacks • Analyze how the flashbacks contribute to the building of tension in the story • Provide a reason for the conflict and the resolution

If students are struggling to answer the text-dependent question, use this follow-up plan for modeling and practice:

Objective	In this lesson you will learn to determine the impact of flashback on the meaning of a text by analyzing the information the flashback provides to the reader.
Prior knowledge to review	Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the plot (RL.6.5)

Steps to achieve objective	Think aloud for direct instruction
1) Locate each flashback in the text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In order to figure out how the flashbacks impact the text, first, I have to find all of the flashbacks. • The first flashback begins right after the first sentence. The first sentence says “remembering how, fifteen years before” so that tells me something has already happened. • The first flashback ends with paragraph 12 because in paragraph 13, it says, “Then he remembered what followed that evening.” This tells me that the flashback ended because it brings me back to the banker remembering the night when he made the bet in his study. It also tells me that another flashback is starting. It could also be argued that the flashback started at the beginning of the story is continuing because the banker is still thinking about the same night. • This flashback finally ends in paragraph 19 because in paragraph 20 it says, “The old banker remembered all of this, and thought: ‘Tomorrow at twelve o’clock he will regain his freedom.’”
2) Ask yourself, “What information is revealed in each flashback?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now I have to figure out why the author decided to use a flashback in his story. • Hmm... when I reread the flashback I see that it gives me a lot of information about the bet. Paragraphs 1–12 explain how the bet came about, who made it, and what was at stake. • In paragraph 1, it states, “Among other things they had talked of capital punishment.” Then it says that many of the “journalists and intellectual men, disapproved of the death penalty.” These sentences tell me how the bet came about. • In paragraphs 3–6, I see this is where the banker and lawyer start to argue. In paragraph the author introduces the lawyer by saying, “Among the guests was a young lawyer, a young man of five and twenty.” Then the lawyer’s opinion of “To live anyhow is better than not at all” is given in paragraph 4. Paragraph 5 shows the reader the banker’s reaction to the lawyer’s opinion: “”he struck the table with his fist and shouted at the young man.” And in paragraph 6, the banker proposes the bet, “”I’ll bet you two million you wouldn’t stay in solitary confinement for five years.” • Now that the two men have made the bet, the banker remembers the terms of the bet. Paragraphs 13 explains the terms of the agreement. <i>Reread paragraph 13 aloud beginning with the sentence, “It was decided that the young man should...” through the last sentence of the paragraph that begins, “The slightest attempt on his part to break the conditions...”</i> • Paragraphs 14–19 explain what the lawyer did over the course of his confinement. <i>Either read the paragraphs aloud to the students or have the students reread them silently and then discuss what they noticed about his activities.</i> • Looking at all of this information, I now know why the author used this flashback. It was so that the author explained the terms of the bet and what the lawyer had gone through over the last fifteen years so that I could understand the conflicts the two characters faced. The banker wanted to kill the lawyer to protect his money. • From the explanation of the lawyer’s activities while in confinement, I understand the toll solitary confinement had taken on the lawyer.

<p>3) Ask yourself, "How does this flashback impact the text?"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now that I understand the purpose of the flashback, I need to figure out how the flashback impacted the text. • As the banker is reliving the night the bet was made through the flashback, he is becoming more agitated and upset at the thought of losing what was left his money. The flashback impacts the text by building up the tension in banker making him realize that he will be "utterly ruined" and leading him to "The one means of being saved from bankruptcy and disgrace." His plan to kill the banker is the main conflict in the story. • We know from reading the end of the story that the banker does have to kill the lawyer to protect his money. Instead the conflict is resolved in paragraph 39 with the news from the watchmen that "they had seen the man who lived in the lodge climb out of the window into the garden, go to the gate, and disappear." • The lawyer's actions that we learned about from paragraphs 14-19 of the flashback give us the basis for the lawyer's reasoning for breaking the bet. In his letter he states, "With a clear conscience I tell you, as before God, who beholds me, that I despise freedom and life and health, and all that in your books is called the good things of the world." We know that he came to this level of enlightenment because of the reading he did while in confinement. In paragraph 18 of the flashback, it tells us that "the prisoner sat immovably at the table and read nothing but the Gospel." This information from the flashback impacts the text by helping me to understand the surprise ending of the lawyer breaking the terms of the bet and leaving his confinement.
--	--

Extension and practice

- Create a timeline of events in the order in which they happened in time.
- Have a class discussion on how the story would have changed if the author presented the events chronologically.

What next?

<p>For additional practice, with students or for students' independent work, apply this learning objective and set of steps to literature to teach students how text structure builds tension (RL.9-10.5)</p>	<p>See more examples of how to teach how text structure builds tension (RL.9-10.5)</p>
---	--

Objective: In this lesson you will learn to determine the impact of flashback on the meaning of a text by analyzing the information the flashback provides to the reader.

1. Locate each flashback in the text.
2. Ask yourself, "What information is revealed in each flashback?"
3. Ask yourself, "How does this flashback impact the text?"

[Close Reading Shakespeare: "The Tempest," Act 1. Scene 2](#)

[Close reading Literature: "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge"](#)

Question 5

Question #5	How does the lawyer’s decision at the end of the story help shape the central idea of the text?	
Standard(s) covered:	RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.	
	Example response that meets standard	Look-fors
	<p>The lawyer’s decision to “renounce the two million of which [he] once dreamed of as paradise and which now [he] despise[s]” helps shape the central idea of the text by reinforcing the theme that human life is worth more than money. In a letter to the banker explaining why he is breaking the terms of the bet “five hours before the time fixed,” the lawyer tells the banker, “I marvel at you who exchange heaven for earth.” In one of the banker’s flashbacks, he recalled how the lawyer spent so much time reading the Gospel: “It seemed strange to the banker that a man who in four years had mastered six hundred learned volumes should waste nearly a year over one thin book of easy comprehension.” The lawyer believes that material possessions are “like a mirage” and they are meaningless to him. Through his reading the lawyer feels he has reached a state of enlightenment where he is wiser than any man. This statement may also demonstrate that the years in confinement have taken a toll on his sanity for he contradicts himself in the next paragraph when he says, “I despise wisdom and the blessings of this world.” The banker’s reaction to reading the lawyer’s decision and reflecting on his own intentions of killing the lawyer make him feel “a great contempt for himself.” The reader then must question the lawyer’s sanity and whether or not what he has endured over the last fifteen years was worth any amount of money, coming to the conclusion that it is not.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicitly state the central idea • Connection between the lawyer’s decision and his years spent in confinement • Analyze the discrepancies in the lawyer’s letter
If students are struggling to answer the text-dependent question, use this follow-up plan for modeling and practice:		
Objective	In this lesson you will learn to determine the central idea of a story by considering specific details in the text.	
Prior knowledge to review	Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of a text, including its relationship to supporting ideas (RL.8.2).	
Steps to achieve objective	Think aloud for direct instruction	

<p>1) Skim the text to locate important information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first thing I need to do is go back into the text and find the lawyer’s decision at the end of the story. Okay, here in paragraph 37, the banker is reading a line from the lawyer’s letter. It says, “To prove to you in action how I despise all that you live by, I renounce the two millions of which I once dreamed as of paradise and which I now despise. To deprive myself of the right to the money I shall go out from here five hours before the time fixed, and so break the compact... ” • Hmm... so the decision the lawyer makes is to break the agreement he has with the banker five hours before the bet is to end which means he doesn’t get the money. • In paragraph 35, the lawyer’s letter reads, “And I despise your books, I despise wisdom and the blessings of this world. It is all worthless, fleeting, illusory, and deceptive like a mirage.”
<p>2) Ask yourself, “What ideas are repeated?”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He seems to be using the word despise over and over again. Twice in paragraph 35 and twice in paragraph 37. So he repeats the word four times. • He also repeats the idea of wisdom. In paragraph 34, the lawyer states in his letter, “I know I am wiser than all of you.” I think he feels this way because in paragraph 33 he says, “For fifteen years I have been intently studying earthly life.” • This is a little confusing because he contradicts himself. He talks about how wise he is, then he says he despises wisdom in paragraph 35.
<p>3) Ask yourself, “How do the repeated ideas help develop the theme?”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now I need to explore how the repetition of the word despise helps to develop the theme. The lawyer despising books, wisdom, money, and “all that you live by” came out of his reading and studying over the last fifteen years because he definitely wanted the money when he made the bet. • I noticed that he said he was studying “earthly life” though. I wonder how this is connected to him giving up the money. • In paragraph 36, the lawyer says, “I marvel at you who exchange heaven for earth” which leads me to believe the lawyer feels he is part of something bigger. • I remember from the banker’s flashback that the lawyer spent a year studying the Gospel from paragraph 18. The same paragraph also tells me that he read books on “Theology and the history of religion.” He seems to have given up the money and despise material possessions because he has gained a sense of enlightenment from his reading during his years of confinement. • The lawyer’s letter is full of contradictions, like him being “wiser than all of you” but also saying “I despise wisdom.” At times, it rambles and it is hard to understand, especially some of the events listed in paragraph 33, like the last sentence of the paragraph: “In your books I have flung myself into the bottomless pit, performed miracles, slain, burned towns, preached new religions, conquered whole kingdoms...” If he truly believes he has done all of this through books, then we have to question his sanity. • After reading the letter, the banker “kissed the strange man on the head, and went out of the lodge, weeping.” The next sentence tells us the banker has great contempt for himself. This could be because he realized the lawyer’s mental state and understands the central idea of the story that a human life is worth more than money.

Extension and practice

- Repeat the steps to find out how the banker's decision to murder the lawyer contributes to another theme of this story.
- Use the graphic organizer on page 22 to help organize the important details around an event in the story and record your connections.

What next?

For additional practice, with students or for students' independent work, apply this learning objective and set of steps to literature to teach students how to determine the theme or central idea of story (RL.9-10.2)

See more examples of how to teach determining the theme or central idea of story (RL.9-10.2)

Objective: In this lesson you will learn to determine the central idea of a story by considering specific details in the text.

1. Skim the text to locate important information.
2. Ask yourself, "What ideas are repeated?"
3. Ask yourself, "How do the repeated ideas help develop the theme?"

[Close reading Literature: "A Pair of Silk Stockings"](#)

[Close reading Literature: "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras Country"](#)

[Close reading Shakespeare: "Hamlet," Act 3, Scene 1](#)

“The Bet” by Anton Chekov

Directions: 1. Cut the strips apart 2. Arrange the strips in the order in which the events actually happened 3. Rearrange the strips in the order in which they were presented in the story.

“I’ll bet you two million you wouldn’t stay in solitary confinement for five years.”

The old banker was walking up and down his study and remembering how, fifteen years before, he had given a party one autumn evening.

Then he remembered what followed that evening.

He made up his mind to go in.

It was decided that the young man should spend the years of his captivity under the strictest supervision in one of the lodges in the banker’s garden.

“To prove to you in action how I despise all that you live by, I renounce the two million of which I once dreamed as of paradise and which I now despise.”

To avoid arousing unnecessary talk, he took from the table the writing in which the millions were renounced, and when he got home locked it up in the fireproof safe.

Desperate gambling on the Stock Exchange, wild speculation and the excitability which he could not get over even in advancing years, had by degrees led to the decline of his fortune and the proud, fearless, self-confident millionaire had become a banker of middling rank, trembling at every rise and fall in his investments.

“The Bet” by Anton Chekov

Directions: Using information from the text, fill out the feature chart for the character of the banker.

	Beginning	Middle	End
Says			
Does			
Thinks			
Feels			

Using the information from this chart, what can you infer about the banker? _____

Theme in "The Bet" by Anton Chekov

Quote from the story	Why is the quote important?	How is it connected to the event in the question?