

On Being Brought from Africa to America

Phillis Wheatley

How does Wheatley use the poem’s closing turn to challenge the racial judgment named earlier in the poem?

TOTAL TIME	TUMBLETA PASSAGE LOCATION
30 minutes	Poem - complete poem

TEACHER SETUP

Open the work in the Enhanced Reader and cue the span using the START and END anchors below.

START	'Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan land,
END	May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train.
PASSAGE ID	sec-wheatley-africa-01

THE MOVE

Analyze how a short poem changes audience and purpose at its closing turn

WHY THIS PASSAGE

The poem begins in first person, but the final couplet addresses “Christians” directly and repeats the racist language used to judge Black people. By placing that language beside Christian salvation, Wheatley forces the audience to confront a contradiction inside its own professed belief.

MARK

Underline first-person references in the opening. Circle the moment the poem addresses “Christians.” Box the words describing racial judgment. Star the final claim about salvation.

NOTICE

- Who appears to be speaking about whom in the first half?
- What changes when the poem directly addresses Christians?
- How does the final religious claim answer the racial judgment quoted before it?

THINK

Answer provisionally: How does Wheatley use the poem’s closing turn to challenge the racial judgment named earlier in the poem? Choose the strongest interpretation you can defend from this passage alone.

WRITE

Write a short evidence-based response. Use at least two details from the assigned passage and explain how they support your interpretation.

CLOSE

Name the single detail that most changed or sharpened your interpretation, and say why.

STRONG ANSWER

The closing turn shifts the poem from personal testimony to direct correction. By addressing Christians and placing racist judgments beside the claim that Black people may join the angelic train, Wheatley uses the audience’s own religious framework to expose a contradiction in racial prejudice.

EVIDENCE

Use the direct address to Christians and the final salvation claim.

WATCH FOR

Do not treat the opening word “mercy” as the whole argument. The key instructional move is the shift in audience and pressure created by the final two lines.

SOLO

Read independently.

SUPPORTED

Narration + highlighting.

LISTENING

Listen; same evidence task.

STUDENT PAGE · GRADE 11 · LESSON 309

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WORK	On Being Brought from Africa to America
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TUMBLETA PASSAGE LOCATION	Poem - complete poem
PASSAGE ID	sec-wheatley-africa-01

Your teacher will open or cue the work in the Enhanced Reader. Use the location and verbatim anchors below to confirm the assigned span.

START

'Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan land,

END

May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train.

READ / LISTEN TO THE ASSIGNED PASSAGE SOLO: read independently. SUPPORTED: use narration and highlighting. LISTENING: listen to the assigned passage. The question and evidence task stay the same.

1. MARK Underline first-person references in the opening. Circle the moment the poem addresses "Christians." Box the words describing racial judgment. Star the final claim about salvation.
2. NOTICE Who appears to be speaking about whom in the first half? What changes when the poem directly addresses Christians? How does the final religious claim answer the racial judgment quoted before it?
3. THINK Answer provisionally: How does Wheatley use the poem's closing turn to challenge the racial judgment named earlier in the poem?
4. WRITE Write a short response using at least two pieces of evidence from this passage.
5. CLOSE Name the single detail that most changed or sharpened your interpretation, and say why.