“Thank You M’am” by Langston Hughes

The theme of this story is People don’t always act like you expect them to act

**Sa**y Mean Matter

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| “But you put yourself in contact with *me*,” said the woman. “If you think that that contact is not going to last awhile, you got another thought coming. When I get through with you, sir, you are going to remember Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones.”  The large woman simply turned around and kicked him right square in his  blue-jeaned sitter. Then she reached down, picked the boy up by his shirt front, and shook him until his  teeth rattled.  “Then it will get washed this evening,” said the large woman starting up the street, dragging the frightened boy behind her.  “If you think that that contact is not going to last awhile, you got another thought coming. When I get through with you, sir, you are going to remember Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones.”  “Then, Roger, you go to that sink and wash your face,” said the woman, whereupon she turned him loose.  “Then we’ll eat,” said the woman, “I believe you’re hungry—or been hungry—to try to snatch my pocketbook.”  “I were young once and I wanted things I could not get.”  She heated some lima beans and ham she had in the icebox, made the cocoa, and set the table. The woman did not ask the boy anything about where he lived, or his folks, or anything else that would embarrass him. Instead, as they ate, she told him about her job in a hotel beauty-shop that stayed open late, what the work was like, and how all kinds of women came in and out, blondes, red-heads, and Spanish. Then she cut him a half of her ten-cent cake.  “Eat some more, son,” she said.  When they were finished eating she got up and said, “Now, here, take this ten dollars and buy yourself some blue suede shoes. And next time, do not make the mistake of latching onto *my* pocketbook *nor nobody else’s*—because shoes come by devilish like that will burn your feet. | When Roger tried to mug the  woman he thought she was an  easy target. Now that he has failed she is not going to turn him into the police, she is going to discipline him herself.  Luella was not such an easy target. She fought back and did not retreat in fear from the “would-be” purse snatcher  Even though she was a woman, she still was tough and unafraid. Luella shows concern for Roger’s welfare.  Luella is going to keep Roger accountable for his actions. She wants to make sure he learns his lesson.  Luella releases Roger from her hold and tells him to clean up.  Luella is going feed Roger because she believes he is hungry, and/or hasn’t eaten in some time. This is the reason for his decision to steal.  Mrs. Jones has wanted things she couldn’t afford.  She shares her food with him and talks to him about her job. She doesn’t not pry and ask him about his life. She doesn’t lecture him about what he did. She treats him with kindness and respect.  Wants to make sure he is full.  Luella gives Roger the money he attempted to steal. She gives him advice about trying to get things dishonorably. This is advice she hopes he will take and keep for the future. | This incident helps to support  the theme because Roger chose this woman thinking she would be an easy target and that even though he failed she would have him arrested. Instead, she is going to deal with him herself.  This is incident helps to support the theme because Luella acts very different then Roger expected when he chose *her* to rob. Even the audience may be surprised by her reaction.  Luella shows concern for the boy her tried to rob her. The audience might expect her to want to end the encounter as soon as possible.  Luella shows concern for the boy her tried to rob her. The audience might expect her to want to end the encounter as soon as possible. The expectation by both the audience and Roger is that Luella will have him arrested, but she doesn’t.  Previously, Roger stated he would run if Luella turned him loose. Roger expected her to hold on to him for awhile.  Roger just tried to rob Luella. Yet, she takes him home and feeds him. She show understanding rather than anger.  Roger would not expect that Luella could possibly relate to why he tried to steal. But, she can.  Roger just tried to rob Luella. Yet, she takes him home and feeds him. She shows understanding and compassion rather than anger.  When someone is robbed, they would not treat the robber with such dignity, grace and generosity. Yet, that is exactly how Luella treats Roger. When he chose her as his victim, he would not have expected it turn out this way. |