



A guide to the works of

JACQUELINE WOODSON



Dear Educator,

Jacqueline Woodson’s books are revered and widely acclaimed—four Newbery Honor awards, two Coretta Scott King Awards, a National Book Award, a NAACP award for Outstanding Literary Work, the Margaret A. Edwards Award for Lifetime Achievement, and the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award. On top of that, Jacqueline Woodson is also the 6th National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature. Awards and accolades aside, her stories are relevant, personal, and thought-provoking. Woodson writes picture books, middle grade and young adult novels—and regardless of the target audience, her books push boundaries. We realize it is unlikely that you’ll be able to teach every single one of her books in a class curriculum, but we hope this guide will give you an appreciation for her work as a whole and will help you select the right books for your students.

This guide includes discussion questions, close reading exercises and extension activities for Woodson’s work. While the activities are written for whole class instruction, they can be easily adapted for independent reading, school book clubs, or literacy circles. Each section begins with general activities exploring some of Woodson’s more commonly used literary elements and techniques in books from that particular genre. The sections also highlight specific books in Woodson’s collection, and the activities coincide specifically with those books. We’ve listed the most relevant Common Core State Standards that align to each activity and included an array of text-to-text opportunities that range in complexity to engage all of your unique learners.

We know this guide will be useful to immerse your students in Jacqueline Woodson’s work and we hope you’ll enjoy discovering and revisiting some of the most quality literature for young readers. Thank you for your support of our books and our brand

Penguin Young Readers School & Library Marketing

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This educator’s guide was written by Erica Rand Silverman and Sharon Kennedy, former high school English teachers and co-founders of Room 228 Educational Consulting (www.rm228.com), along with Shannon Rheault, an elementary school teacher.



“ I used to say I’d be a teacher or a lawyer or a hairdresser when I grew up, but even as I said these things, I knew what made me happiest was writing. ”

I wrote on everything and everywhere. I remember my uncle catching me writing my name in graffiti on the side of a building. (It was not pretty for me when my mother found out.) I wrote on paper bags and my shoes and denim binders. I chalked stories across sidewalks and penciled tiny tales in notebook margins. I loved and still love watching words flower into sentences and sentences blossom into stories.

I also told a lot of stories as a child. Not “Once upon a time” stories but basically, outright lies. I loved lying and getting away with it! There was something about telling the lie-story and seeing your friends’ eyes grow wide with wonder. Of course I got in trouble for lying but I didn’t stop until fifth grade.

That year, I wrote a story and my teacher said, “This is really good.” Before that I had written a poem about Martin Luther King that was, I guess, so good no one believed I wrote it. After lots of brouhaha, it was believed finally that I had indeed penned the poem, which went on to win me a Scrabble game and local acclaim. So by the time the story rolled around and the words “This is really good” came out of the otherwise down-turned lips of my fifth grade teacher, I was well on my way to understanding that a lie on the page was a whole different animal—one that won you prizes and got surly teachers to smile. A lie on the page meant lots of independent time to create your stories and the freedom to sit hunched over the pages of your notebook without people thinking you were strange.

Lots and lots of books later, I am still surprised when I walk into a bookstore and see my name on a book or when the phone rings and someone on the other end is telling me I’ve just won an award. Sometimes, when I’m sitting at my desk for long hours and nothing’s coming to me, I remember my fifth grade teacher, the way her eyes lit up when she said “This is really good.” The way I—the skinny girl in the back of the classroom who was always getting into trouble for talking or missed homework assignments—sat up a little straighter, folded my hands on the desk, smiled, and began to believe in me.

Jacqueline Woodson

PICTURE BOOKS

Woodson's picture books are perfect for exploring sophisticated themes with young children. Depending on students' ages, reading levels, and prior knowledge, read aloud to a group for a shared reading experience or have students read independently and explore the pages on their own.

Family Theme

A major theme throughout Woodson's children's books is family. She shows that families are unique. Ask students: What makes a family? Who do you consider to be part of your family? Is it just people that you are related to or can it include other important people? Have students write a list of the people in their lives that are part of their family. Have students illustrate their work and share it with the people on their lists.

R.CCR.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Perseverance Theme

Perseverance is a theme that Woodson has woven throughout all of her stories. Her strong characters work their way through difficult times like family hardship, historical events, and social issues. Explore these examples. Students can connect to these stories on a variety of levels. Ask them to make a text-to-self connection and share a time that they had to overcome something difficult. This can be done through writing, artwork, or music. Their choice of presentation should highlight their strengths.

R.CCR.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Metaphor

Woodson artfully uses common objects in her stories (e.g., quilts, pebbles, a rope). The deeper meanings that she is trying to convey can be found within these objects. Ask students: How can a simple object become an important part of a person's life? For example, the quilts in *Show Way* are a metaphor for family history and strength. Have students bring common objects to school that mean a great deal to them (baby blanket, stuffed animal, a book). Ask each student to prepare a presentation that will explain the object and its importance. Students may arrive at new ideas about how their objects have shaped their lives.

R.CCR.4 Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

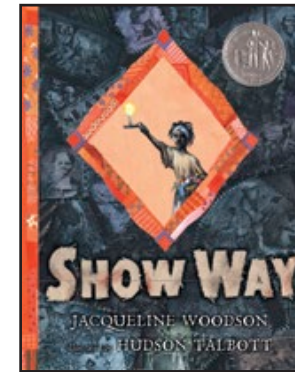
Setting

Many of Woodson's books travel through extended periods of time. Define setting with the class—focusing on the passage of time and change, and how they see this developed in Woodson's books. Students can analyze the things in their lives that change as time passes. As a culminating activity, help students create a time capsule to be opened years later. This may include the letter (see *Rope for Hope*

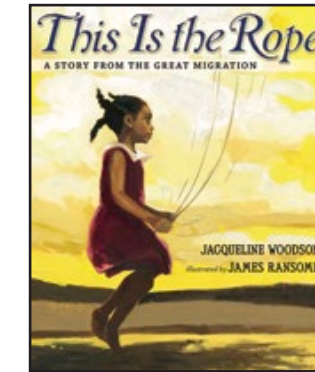
activity in *This Is the Rope* section) that they wrote to themselves, a self-portrait, photographs, a letter from the teacher and parents, a list of current favorites, and small meaningful objects. All of these things can be sealed in a paper towel tube to be opened in the future; a second grade class that creates a one year (or ten year!) time capsule will be surprised how much can change in such a short time. What a fun way to follow the passage of time!

R.CCR.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

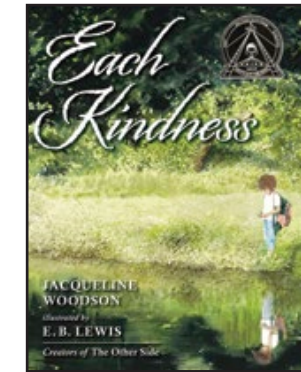
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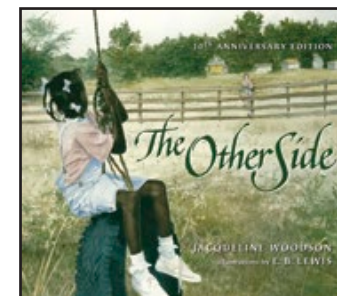
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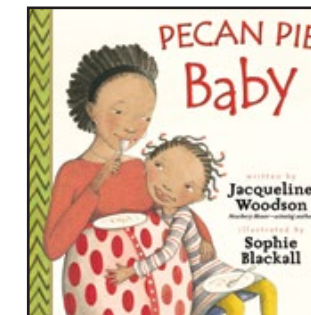
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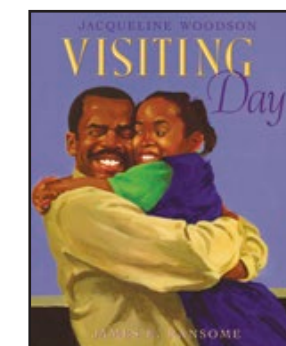
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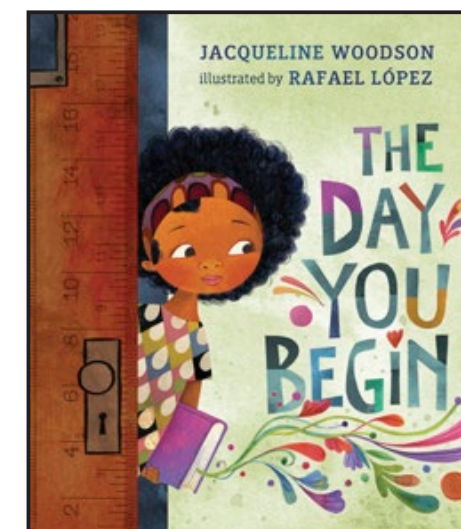
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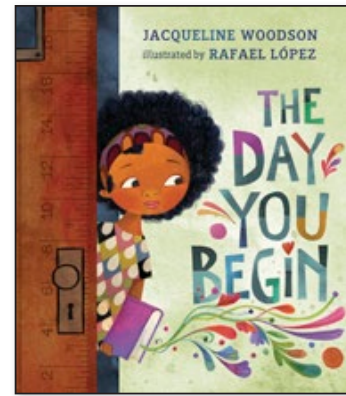
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On Sale 8/28/18

The Day You Begin

The Day You Begin is a beautiful picture book that celebrates the differences of people in the world. The classroom may be one of the first places that children experience these differences and the celebration of them. The message in this book is clear: Your unique story may feel uncomfortable at first, but eventually it will be the very thing that helps you find your place. A great choice for the first day of school!



- ✓ Diversity
- ✓ Imagery
- ✓ Self-Esteem

Dive in & Discuss

1. Have you ever walked into a room full of people who seemed different than you? How did you feel? What made you feel that way? Discuss your feelings and how they changed as time passed.
2. What is something that makes you unique? Is it a positive or negative trait? How can you turn this trait into your new beginning?
3. What is diversity? Create a kid-friendly definition and post it in the classroom. Why is it important to have conversations about diversity? How might people with differences in ability, culture, race, gender or wealth/money feel when they are in a group that seems different from them?

Explore & Extend

Who's in the Room?

This would be a great first day of school activity or one to use any time your class is entering a new situation and meeting new people. After reading *The Day You Begin*, lead the class in a discussion about what information is important to know when you meet someone new. What things do you learn about each of the characters in the book as they reveal themselves to one another? What would you ask someone when you meet them for the first time? Generate a list of questions that the class feels will help them get to know their classmates. Encourage them to think of a few questions that will help them dig a little deeper when they interview their peers during the activity. Partner students and ask them to interview each other. Have them list all of the answers that they have in common as well as their differences. A Venn diagram is a great graphic organizer to use with this activity. At the conclusion of the interviews ask students to introduce their partner to the class. They can choose the most interesting parts of their conversation to share. Finally, ask the class if there is a character from the book that they relate to and, if they are comfortable sharing, to explain why.

To extend the above discussion, explain that your class is a safe place for everyone to share and celebrate their own unique qualities. Sharing should be done in a way that is loud and proud! Have students express themselves through art. Take out the art supplies and encourage students to create a display that shares their awesomeness! Have students think about what makes each of them unique. The possibilities are endless! Invite students to decorate the classroom with these displays of themselves or make a class book. The title can be *The Day Our Class Began!* What a great way to create a positive classroom culture that celebrates diversity!

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.5 Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

Think Like an Illustrator

The Day You Begin is an illustrator's dream. A story with such strong feeling and emotion can be illustrated with a great deal of imagery. That's just what Rafael López, the illustrator of the book, did! Ask your students to imagine that they have been tasked with the job of illustrating this beautiful story. Read the book one time aloud to your students without showing them the illustrations. What lines from the book would make them pick up their pencil and start sketching? What are the words that Woodson chooses that might make the illustrations easily fall onto the page? How does she use imagery to create a picture in the reader's mind? When students have completed their illustrations, read the book a second time and show them López's drawings this time around. How do their own drawings compare and contrast with López's? Ask students to share why they created the images they did and why they think López chose the artwork he created. Help your students walk in the shoes of an illustrator for a day!

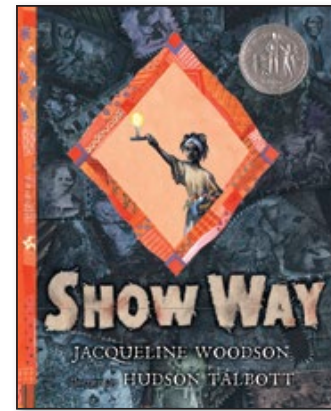
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4 Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.



Show Way

A beautiful story that shows one family's path from slavery through the Civil Rights Movement to today. The story illustrates how the use of thread and fabric can hold a family together through many generations. It is a celebration of time, family, and strength.

- ✓ Oral Storytelling and Metaphors
- ✓ African American History and Customs
- ✓ Family History and Timelines



AD720L

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Dive in & Discuss

1. What elements of plot change in this story? What themes stay the same?
2. How were the quilts used to preserve this family's history? What are some other ways that families keep track of and share their stories?
3. What adjectives would you use to describe the members of this family?

Explore & Extend

Follow the Plot: Timeline

As a class, create an illustrated timeline to follow the story of Soonie's family. Discuss the historical events that took place throughout the family's history. Read informational texts about these events to learn more and to integrate with information already gathered through Woodson's book. This may be followed by a sequencing activity for younger students. Older students may conduct their own research to explore the historical events that occur throughout the story. They may build their own timeline and illustrate each event.

R.CCR.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

Creating and Collaborating: Class Quilt

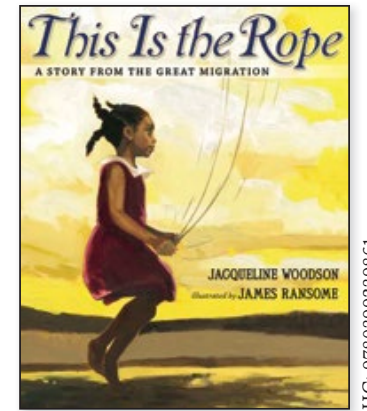
Create a class *Show Way* quilt. All children use the same exact size and type of paper. Younger children may just draw a self-portrait and write their name. Older children may design squares that tell their personal story or important events of the school year. Hang the paper "quilt pieces" directly next to each other to create a paper quilt. Discuss how their class quilt relates to the *Show Way* quilt and what each quilt symbolizes. The quilt will be a great way to preserve the class history!

R.CCR.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

This Is the Rope

This is the story of a simple rope that becomes an important part of a family's history as they search for a better life. The rope has many uses, but most of all, it ties a family together for generations. Read this story to see how seemingly small things can end up being bigger than you think.

- ✓ Family History and Heirlooms
- ✓ Themes of Change, Hope and Adaptation
- ✓ Great Migration



AD1090L

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Dive in & Discuss

1. What were the different ways the rope was used?
2. Why did the family put the rope around the photographs on the piano? How is this image of the rope different from the others in the story?
3. Why do you think the grandmother wanted to trade the old rope for a new one at the end of the story?

Explore & Extend

Retelling & Sequencing

Give students small pieces of rope. Have each person retell a piece of this family's story, tying each part of the rope together as they go. Younger students may need to use sequencing cards for this activity. This will show how the details of the story tie together to create the plot and a main idea.

R.CCR.5 Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

Rope for Hope

Today, people use colored ribbons to show hope (e.g., pink for breast cancer, purple for epilepsy, red for heart health). Give students pieces of rope to make the hope ribbon for African Americans during the Great Migration. Students can also apply this hope to what they want for their own future. Have students write a letter to themselves to be opened in the future. The letter tells about their life now and makes predictions about what their future may look like.

W.CCR.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

Each Kindness

Chloe learns about kindness in a difficult way. When Maya joins her class, Chloe finds herself turning away from her and denying her requests for friendship. Her teacher shows the class that kindness can be spread, and Chloe realizes that she has missed an opportunity to do the right thing.

- ✓ Peer Pressure and Bullying
- ✓ Spreading Kindness
- ✓ Point of View



AD640L

HC: 9780399237492

Dive in & Discuss

1. Why were the kids mean to Maya? What adjectives could be used to describe the characters in this story?
2. Do you think the kids were bullying Maya? Why or why not? Give specific details from the story that support your opinion.
3. Why do you think Chloe wanted Maya to come back to school?

Explore & Extend

Walk in Another's Shoes: Point of View

Tell this story from Maya's point of view. What kind of a person do you think Maya is? Write a letter from Maya to her classmates that explains how she felt when she was in their class. Did we know Maya's feelings in the book? Why or why not? Share the letters and explore the concept of empathy. In the story, Maya is wearing shoes that are broken or don't fit properly. How do the shoe descriptions connect to the idea of empathy in this story? Are your connections literal, figurative, or both?

R.CCR.6 Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Pay it Forward

Put a Kindness Tree in the classroom. When someone performs an act of kindness for someone, the recipient of the kindness can add it to the tree. When the tree has fully "blossomed," discuss how the class feels with a beautiful green tree in the classroom. How does the beauty of a healthy, full-grown tree compare to the feelings someone might have when they are kind to others? How does this concept connect to *Each Kindness*?

R.CCR.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Coretta Scott King Honor

MIDDLE GRADE BOOKS

These middle grade titles are sensational reads for teachers covering *Coming of Age* units or for diving deep into the choices writers make in their craft. Woodson's middle grade books are rich with colorful figurative language and accessible, relevant themes.

Home Theme

Home is a major theme in many of Woodson's novels. Have students create an expression of what home means to one of the characters in the novel. Let them choose their medium: poem, essay, digital slideshow, recipe, rap, dance, etc. Ask students: How does Woodson seem to define home in this novel? What evidence do you see that shows this? How do you define home?

R.CCR.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

Literary Techniques

Woodson's novels are the playgrounds her words swing on, climb on, and run around. Find examples where she uses personification, onomatopoeia, imagery, metaphor, and more (e.g., imagery and personification: "...that cold gray winter-light coming in from outside making everything, even the toaster, look like it was on the verge of tears..." *After Tupac and D Foster*, 42). Why does she use them in that part of the book? How does it enrich her writing? Students write their own narrative, poem, blog, tweet, etc., where they try to master one of these literary techniques.

R.CCR.4 Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

"I Shall Overcome" Theme

How do people overcome hardships? Woodson explores this theme in many of her novels. After completing one of Woodson's novels, read the *New York Times* article "Birth of a Freedom Anthem" by Ethan J. Kytte and Blain Roberts, Langston Hughes' poem "Mother to Son," and Anne Sexton's poem "Courage." Analyze how each writer conveys how people can find the courage inside themselves to overcome. How does the structure (i.e. section, stanza, topic sentence) of the text contribute to conveying the writer's idea?

R.CCR.5 Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

Voice

Readers can hear, feel, and understand Woodson's strong characters in her writing. Their voices are so strong. Discuss how Woodson creates her characters' voices (e.g., perspective, point of view, internal conflict, dialogue) in her novels. Students create their own children's books writing in first-person perspective and giving their character a strong voice. Visit a local kindergarten and pair students up with kindergarten book buddies to share their books and discuss their characters.

W.CCR.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

Middle Grade Books by Jacqueline Woodson



Harbor Me

Who will harbor you? This is a question that a special group of kids grapple with when they are invited to a classroom and are encouraged to talk about anything and everything. Each child has a different story and a different struggle. As they grow more and more connected they learn the valuable lesson that everyone needs someone to harbor them.

- ✓ **Current Topics**
- ✓ **Personal Narrative**
- ✓ **Metaphor**

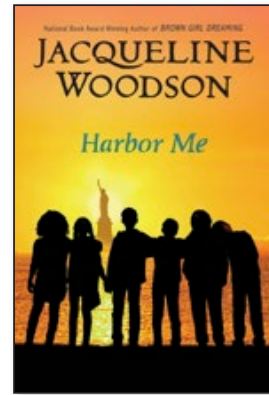
Dive in & Discuss

1. Why is it important to document and preserve memories? Why does Haley want to record the stories of the kids in the ARTT room?
2. The kids in the ARTT room are described as "Eight special kids" (Chapter 2, pg 5). Discuss what this might mean. What do you think is the criteria for being in the group? What do you think is the purpose of the group? Find evidence in the text to support your thinking.
3. Compare and contrast Haley and Esteban. How are their family situations alike, specifically with their fathers? How are they different? How does Esteban's situation help Haley come to terms with her own family's story?
4. Explore the dynamic between Ashton and the rest of the group. How is he different from the others in the group? How is he similar? How do the similarities and differences among the students in the group affect their relationships with one another?
5. Define *harbor*. Discuss the literal definition and how this connects to the metaphorical meaning. Discuss what it means to harbor someone. What are ways that you do this in your life? What are the ways that you or a family member or friend are harbored? What examples can you find in your community where you see organizations or groups harboring?

Explore & Extend

Who's Who? Character Analysis

Ms. Laverne says the Ailanthus tree is a metaphor for each of the kids just like in the story *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* (Chapter 1, pg 2). Research characteristics of the Ailanthus tree. Discuss each student and how their story shares characteristics with the tree. Who are the "eight special kids" in the ARTT room? Divide the class into small groups and assign one of the members of the ARTT group to each classroom group. Each group should thoroughly analyze the character and make a biography page to distribute to the rest of the class. The page should include as many details as they can find in the book as well as things about the character that they can infer from the text, such as how the character changes or develops through the



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story and why. The group should also agree upon one or two quotations that really help highlight their character. This student-created resource can be referred to as the book is discussed and explored.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Relevant Topics | Current Events

Esteban says, "We heard that my papi's somewhere in Florida now. . . It's like a jail. But my papi didn't do anything bad. He was just working in the factory and they came and took him" (Chapter 11, pg 49). Immigration has been a controversial political topic in America recently but also throughout its history. Woodson addresses it exclusively through the eyes of the child. Why might she have made this choice? Build students' background knowledge about immigration. Explore the resource below to enhance their understanding before or during the reading of this book.

http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/newamericans/foreducators_index.html

After creating a safe harbor for your own students to share their respectful thoughts, opinions and analyses, encourage discussion on the following topics: What struggles do immigrants face in their journey? What are the debates surrounding immigration? Where have immigrants to the United States emigrated from in the past? What was Jacqueline Woodson's purpose for writing this book? How is she harboring people by writing this story?

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

Poetry Connection

Esteban shares his father's poems with the kids in the ARTT room. They are filled with feeling and emotion. They have the power to make Esteban feel close to his father when he is very far away. Encourage students to write poetry that Esteban might write to his father or write poetry for one of their family members. Ask your students: How does writing poetry help you communicate in a different way? Explore other mediums of self-expression with your students, including rap, ballet, hip-hop, painting, photography, etc., and how each has its own techniques to convey emotions and beliefs. Have students bring in or present their favorite form of expression.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Step into the Room

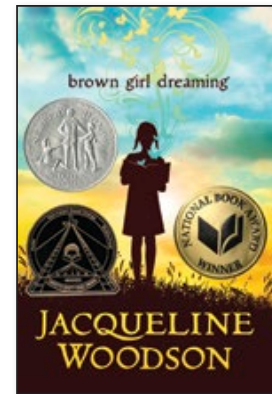
Much of this story takes place in a special room in a school called the ARTT room. The kids that are chosen have mixed feelings as they enter the room. They all have a different story and are encouraged to share with one another in their own way every Friday afternoon. Read *The Day You Begin* aloud to the class. Do you think this book is a good companion to *Harbor Me*? Why or why not? How does this picture book tell a similar story to the novel? How are the two pieces different? How could this book be useful for the eight special kids in the ARTT room? Review the definition of *theme* with the students. What are some of the themes that are present in *Harbor Me* and *The Day You Begin*? Ask partners to generate a list for each book and compare to see how many themes the books have in common. Challenge your students to bring in one of their favorite books with a similar theme to share with the class.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Brown Girl Dreaming

Image-filled free verse will guide your students through Woodson's journey—to understand the world of Jim Crow, religion, family, and this new passion that makes her yearn to pick up that pencil and write.

- ✓ Poetry
- ✓ Historical Connections
- ✓ Descriptive Writing



990L

Dive in & Discuss

1. Jacqueline's mother tells her children that they will experience a "moment when you walk into a room and no one there is like you" (14). Have you experienced this? What might this feel like?
2. Why does Woodson structure her memoir into five distinct parts? How does this choice add to the story?
3. Where does Jacqueline start to see change happening in her life? Where does she start to see it in the world in which she lives?
4. What is Jacqueline's attitude toward God and religion? How does she seem conflicted?
5. Jacqueline loves writing because it allows her to create the worlds she imagines. What world did she create through her memoir? Is there an end to her story?

Explore & Extend

Equality Party

On pages 3-4, Woodson lists several names of people fighting for a similar goal. Divide the class into groups. Have each group research and explore the following: a) What was this person's main goal? b) What philosophies and strategies did he/she use to reach this goal? Once the research is complete, students prepare for and hold an Equality Party where students attend with name tags and in character as the people they researched. Instruct them to discuss with other "attendees" how they fought for equality using their unique strategies and techniques. After the party, the groups discuss what they learned about the other historical figures through the conversations at the party. How were they similar and different from one another?

W.CCR.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Poetry Tie-ins

Brown Girl Dreaming is a unique story—it is Woodson's personal journey and it is told through free verse. A dream book for teachers to use in the classroom! Explore why Woodson may have chosen poetry vs. prose to tell her story and the effect this has on the reader. Have students choose their favorite lines and rewrite them into prose. How does this affect the emotion behind the words, the author's purpose, and the pictures that are created in our minds? Or does it? Have students create their own historical haiku poetry books while studying a civil rights unit and read/perform them at an assembly. Or have them write their own mini-memoir in verse, chock-full of imagery.

W.CCR.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Showing vs. Telling

Woodson is a master of showing vs. telling in her writing. Close read "the ghosts of the nelsonville house" on pages 10-12. Find examples where Woodson describes a place or a person. What *else* is she saying in these lines? What does she say explicitly, and what can you infer from the text? What techniques does she use to *show* us (e.g., imagery, personification, line breaks) and what exactly is she showing? How is this different from *telling*? Direct students to identify other lines where Woodson *shows* in her writing. Challenge your students to write their own poems where they practice this technique.

R.CCR.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

This I Believe

Through Woodson's odyssey searching for her identity in all of the worlds she's navigated, she states "I believe that there is good in each of us/no matter who we are or what we believe in" (317). What do your students believe and know to be true? Examine the NPR series *This I Believe*. Listen to and read several essays of your choosing. Ask students what they all have in common. How is each unique? What elements go into writing one of these essays? Walk students through the writing process to write their own *This I Believe* essay. Take it a step further and record them to share with other schools who are doing the same project!

W.CCR.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

2015 Newbery Honor Award

2014 National Book Award Winner

2014 E. B. White Read-Aloud Award Winner

New York Times Bestseller

2014 LA Times Book Prize Finalist

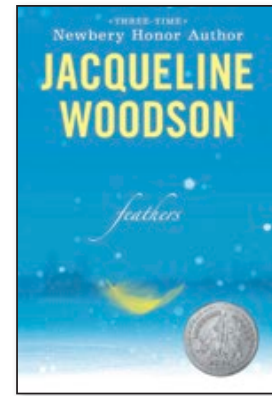
2015 Sibert Honor Award

Coretta Scott King Author Award

Feathers

Will Frannie find hope even as she is faced with changing friends, bullies, and family challenges? Rich discussions will fly through your classroom as your students watch Frannie spread her wings.

- ✓ Literary Techniques
- ✓ Thematic Connections
- ✓ Compare and Contrast



710L

Dive-in & Discuss

1. Frannie wonders why a “kid like that” is going to her school (2). What does she mean by this? What statement does Woodson seem to be making about race relations in Frannie’s world in the 1970s? What other examples throughout the novel does Woodson use to support her claim? How have things changed since the 1970s? How have they remained the same?
2. What examples of empathy do you see throughout the novel? How do people become empathetic? Do you think empathy is important? Why or why not?
3. How do Frannie and her friends seem to be struggling with religion in their lives?
4. Why is the novel broken into different “parts”? How does this chosen structure add to the story? After reading each part, write one sentence that sums up the main idea from that section.
5. In what “different worlds” do characters in the novel live? Can you live in more than one world? Explain.

Explore & Extend

Signs of Hope

Frannie’s brother, Sean, who communicates through sign language, is an inspiration to her and often reminds her to be hopeful. How does he do this for her? What does Frannie witness Sean doing or saying that gives her hope and inspires her? Discuss what themes related to hope are woven throughout the novel. How do some of the characters respond to challenges they face yet still hang on to hope? How do you and your students hold on to hope when there doesn’t seem to be any? Have students write as many synonyms for hope as they can generate. Challenge them to learn these words in multiple languages—including sign language.

R.CCR.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

Literary Technique Hunt

Woodson uses similes, metaphors, and imagery galore in *Feathers*. After reviewing the definitions of some of Woodson’s most often used literary devices, have your students go on a literary technique hunt. On flash cards, groups track the examples they find, and on the back, write which literary technique Woodson is using. The group with the most wins! Groups may later use these cards to run their own discussions about the purpose of these devices in the story and what they mean. What do they add to the story? Can they connect them to the themes? Which other writers have used similar techniques, and why?

R.CCR.4 Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

Welcome Pamphlets

Frannie’s grandma says to her, “You just remember there’s a time when each one of us is the different one and when it’s our turn, we’re always wishing and hoping it was somebody else. You be that somebody else when you see that boy. You be the one to remember” (72-73). What does this statement communicate to your students? Read Woodson’s picture book *Each Kindness* aloud to the class. Discuss how these two different texts written for different age audiences compare and contrast on the topics of being the “outcast” and of how others treat the outcast. Students create pamphlets designed for kindergartners on how to treat all students and that celebrate all different kinds of diversity. Share your pamphlets with a local kindergarten class.

R.CCR.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Biblical Allusions

In many of Woodson’s novels, she alludes to religion and more specifically to the Bible (e.g., “pockmark on the center of each palm,” 25). Define *allusion* with your class. Why is it important for us to be able to identify allusions while reading? Have students analyze some of these examples from *Feathers*. Consider reading some of the alluded-to Bible stories from a children’s Bible aloud to the class. Why might Woodson allude to these stories in her novel? Spark your students’ interest in allusions and follow up this activity by having them bring in song lyrics, book cover art, movie scenes, news article headings, TV show characters’ names, paintings, etc. that are examples of allusions (e.g., biblical allusions, literary allusions, etc.).

Teacher Resource:

<https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/theme-symbolism-allusion-lesson>

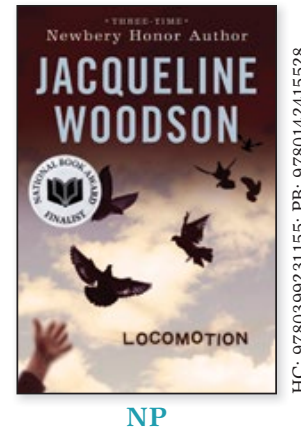
R.CCR.4 Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

2008 Newbery Honor Award

Locomotion

How does a child recover from losing his parents? Can he? This novel explores Lonnie's journey as he tries to pick up the pieces of his life and put them back together. Will poetry allow Lonnie to find his voice—and a new, happy life?

- ✓ **Point of View**
- ✓ **Poetry**
- ✓ **Literary Techniques**



Dive in & Discuss

1. How does Lonnie feel about his sister, Lili? How do we know?
2. How does Woodson show Lonnie's struggle between childhood innocence and growing up?
3. What does the act of writing seem to do for Lonnie?
4. How does God play a role in Lonnie's life? Where does he see the absence of God? Where does he see God's presence?
5. Why do you think Lonnie prefers free verse over other forms in poetry (67)? Which do you like best? Why?

Explore & Extend

Narration & Point of View

We hear Lonnie's voice so clearly in *Locomotion* and feel what he feels. Why and how is this? Examine how telling a story in first-person narration affects the telling of that story. If the story were told in third-person narration, how would this change how the readers view the conflicts, themes, characters, etc.? Analyze several of the students' favorite passages/poems from the book and rewrite them in third-person narration or from the point of view of Lili or Ms. Marcus. What new information might be revealed or what might be missing if the narration changes? How would each of the characters view the same event?

R.CCR.6 Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Poetry Book

Students create their very own poetry books modeled after Lonnie's. Students choose ten of the same titles as Woodson uses as her chapter titles to write ten poems for their own book. You may want to review the elements of sonnets, epistle poems, and haikus before they get on their way. Include teacher conferences and peer conferences to aid in the revision process. Better yet, students may buddy up on Google Drive to receive and give peer feedback. Have students bind their books and become visiting poets in another class or a local high school classroom. How cool would it be to have other students discussing their poems and teaching some of their own writing techniques and choices!

W.CCR.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

Research & Report

Woodson gives us a glimpse into Lonnie's life in a group home and foster care. What does Lonnie reveal about his two "homes"? Thousands of real children and teenagers live in group homes and foster care in America. Have students complete a KWL chart about group homes and foster care. With guidance from you and the librarian, students research (print and digital resources) to answer some of their questions, focusing in on one or two broader questions. Students take notes from their research and later create an outline that they use to write an informative essay showcasing what they learned. Students share with the class one piece of information that they learned that surprised them. What questions do they still have even after their research is complete? Give extra credit to students who would like to follow up to get those answers!

W.CCR.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Rap

Sometimes rap gets a bad rap. Lonnie is relieved when Ms. Marcus states that rap is poetry—and what a fun mechanism to engage your students! Ask students to bring in some of their favorite rap songs. Listen to some early rap from the 1970s and 1980s, and compare to today's rap. Explore the writing techniques the artists use(d). How are they similar and different? Chart their themes and topics. Are they still relevant today? How so? Have students write their own rap songs that mirror some of the same techniques and themes as their favorite songs, or have them explore whole new themes.

Teacher Resources:

<http://www.kidzworld.com/article/5321-pioneers-of-hip-hop>

<http://www.powerpoetry.org/actions/7-tips-writing-rap>

R.CCR.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

2003 National Book Award
Finalist

Coretta Scott King Honor

YOUNG ADULT BOOKS

As students come of age, they are introduced to more social ills. Your classroom is a safe environment for students to explore these sometimes difficult topics—and Woodson's books can help you do that. Her characters are sincere in their choices and their responses to conflicts, and students will relate. Explore Woodson's very personal and universal themes with your students to help them understand the ripple effect in the world around them.

Audio vs. Print

Read one of Woodson's novels that also has an audio version. Reread a favorite passage from the book and then listen to the same passage in the audio version. How do the different mediums compare and contrast? Do the elements of narrative (e.g., plot, climax, characterization, conflict) seem different or similar in each version? How? Have students record their own passages from one of the novels, paying close attention to how they use their voices and for what purpose.

R.CCR.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

Symbols in the Gallery

Woodson's books are sprinkled with unique symbolism. Ask students to help you identify some of the symbols in her novel(s) (e.g., moon in *Beneath a Meth Moon*, plants in *Miracle's Boys*). Hang poster paper around the room and label each with one of the symbols you've identified. Direct groups to walk through the "gallery" and brainstorm what each of these words brings to mind, reminds them of, makes them feel, stands for, etc. and have students write directly on the posters. Give each group three minutes at each poster then rotate. As a whole class discuss the significance of each symbol and why Woodson may have added it to her novel(s).

L.CCR.5 Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

Theme

Coming-of-age is a recurring theme in many of Woodson's YA books, and your students will definitely be able to relate! Read the following quotations together. Have your students interpret the quotations, discuss whether they agree or disagree, and then make connections to Woodson's novel(s). Would her characters agree or disagree? Why? How do the themes compare and contrast? Students should be able to defend their positions with evidence. (To reach your kinetic learners, have students stand up, form a line, and step to one side to agree and the other to disagree.)

- "Parents can only give good advice or put them on the right paths, but the final forming of a person's character lies in their own hands." —Anne Frank
- "Most people don't grow up. Most people age. They find parking spaces, honor their credit cards, get married, have children, and call that maturity. What that is, is aging." —Maya Angelou
- "If growing up means it would be beneath my dignity to climb a tree, I'll never grow up, never grow up, never grow up! Not me!" —J.M. Barrie

- "Come away, O human child
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand."
—W.B. Yeats, *The Collected Poems*
- "He wanted to care, and he could not care. For he had gone away and he could never go back anymore. The gates were closed, the sun was down, and there was no beauty left..." —F. Scott Fitzgerald, *All the Sad Young Men*

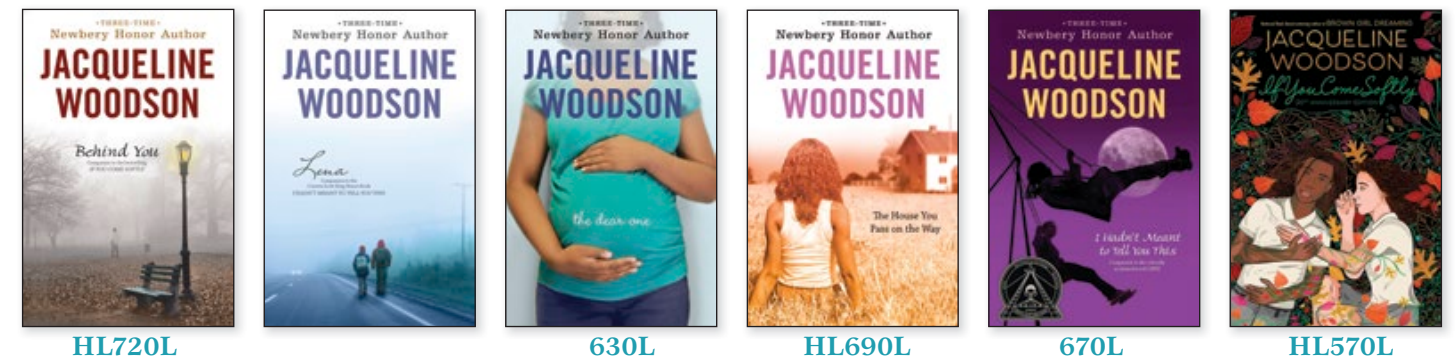
SL.CCR.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Elements of Plot

How does Woodson create her exciting yet poignant page-turners? Discuss the elements of plot (i.e., introduction/exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution) and how they interact with and affect each other. Explore how the order of the elements changes from book to book and discuss the plotlines of several books you've read together. After reading one of Woodson's novels, students work in groups to create their own graphic organizer that shows the order of the plot elements in this particular Woodson novel. They also add details from the text (and visuals) that support each element. Students may use this as a reference for future reads to help them identify how writers create their favorite fast-moving scenes!

R.CCR.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

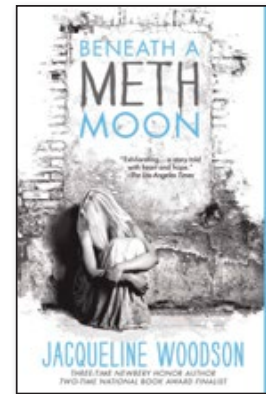
Young Adult Books by Jacqueline Woodson



Beneath a Meth Moon

A heartbreaking tale of addiction explores how great loss can lead to bad choices. Will Laurel pull through her pain and find the strength to get her head back above the water?

- ✓ **Setting**
- ✓ **Allusions**
- ✓ **Great for Studying Narrative!**



730L

Dive In & Discuss

1. Woodson mentions *water* in the first line of the novel. What role does water play throughout Laurel's journey? What might it symbolize?
2. How does Laurel use writing in her life? Why does it seem so important to her?
3. Woodson alludes to the passage of time often in her story. Do you think we can ever "put our past behind us" as her daddy says (44)?
4. What clues does Woodson give that Laurel is losing herself to meth?
5. How does Woodson weave the theme of hope throughout Laurel's journey? If the story continued after Laurel drops Jesse Jr. at preschool, do you believe Laurel would stay clean and healthy? Why or why not?

Explore & Extend

Postcard Settings

Laurel's pain travels with her as she moves from one place to the next. Explore and research the real places that this fictional character lived (i.e., Pass Christian, Jackson, Long Beach, Galilee). Examine the links below to learn more about Hurricane Katrina and what loss real families experienced. Consider why Woodson has her novel ramble through these different settings. How do these settings shape Laurel? How do they drive the plot? How does Woodson's fictional portrayal of a life unraveling after Katrina compare with historical accounts? Have students choose one of the settings. Writing from Laurel's perspective and voice, students write to one of Laurel's friends or relatives explaining the effect that that setting is having on her.

Teacher Resources

<http://www.history.com/topics/hurricane-katrina>

<http://mshistorynow.mdah.state.ms.us/articles/253/voices-of-katrina>

W.CCR.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection and research.

Annotating Poetry

Woodson alludes to both Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken" and William Butler Yeats' poem "The Lake Isle of Innisfree." Why might she do this? To try to answer this question, it is important students understand each of the poems first and then make comparisons to *Beneath a Meth Moon*. On a projected screen, display the first poem. Invite students to come to the front of the class and interact with the poem in three ways: a) underline and write who, what, when, where, and why in red, b) circle images they can see, feel, hear, taste, or smell in blue, and c) write questions they still have in green. Do the same with the second poem. Discuss their annotations as you go. In small groups, students then discuss why they think Woodson would allude to these poems in her novel. What do they add to the story? How do these poems address similar themes? Each student then writes a personal letter to Woodson explaining why they think these allusions were either effective or not. Encourage students to use topic sentences and details from the discussions to support their claims.

R.CCR.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

W.CCR.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Stories from Stories

Woodson has said that one of the reasons she wrote this book was to help her deal with the sadness she felt from Hurricane Katrina. She said there were so many sad stories that she wanted to write her own happy ending to at least one of them. And Laurel's grandmother M'lady tells her that "the best stories come from other people's stories" (24). Have students interview a friend or family member about one moment in his/her life that is poignant, that changed them in some way, and that taught them something. Students then use their notes to write that person's story and life lesson. Invite the interviewed family and friends for "Stories at Sunset"—a celebration of lessons learned.

W.CCR.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

Writing to Understand & Heal

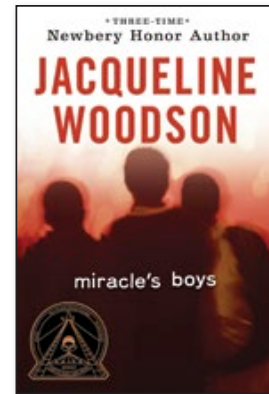
Jacqueline Woodson writes in her me "When I feel powerless against something, the thing I end up doing is writing about it and coming to understand it through writing about it. I'm hoping that readers will come to understand the enormity of the devastation by reading about it" (Woodson, 186). What did you learn more about in reading *Beneath a Meth Moon*? Have the class brainstorm a difficult/painful universal struggle in young people's lives and/or in society today. Each student chooses one from the list to research (and understand it, like Woodson!). Using their new understanding, students then write a fictional narrative with a developed character whose struggle drives the story. Will their narratives end hopeful like Woodson's?

W.CCR.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Miracle's Boys

This story is perfect for a unit on Empathy or Point of View—how we interpret events is often affected by who is telling the story. The brothers share the pain of losing their parents...but how they deal with that pain is unique to each. Will they ever be able to walk in the others' shoes and become a real family again?

- ✓ Theme
- ✓ Symbolism
- ✓ Connotation



660L

Dive in & Discuss

1. Why do the brothers often whisper when speaking? What do we learn from the whispers? Why do the brothers seem to feel like they can't speak about their feelings? What secrets do they hold from one another and why?
2. What examples of blame, shame, and grief do we see in the novel? Research the stages of grief. Chart the brothers' journeys as they move through the stages. How do we see them changing?
3. After burning all of the photos of Mama, why does Charlie then put plants in the windows of the apartment? What might the plants symbolize?
4. Why was it so difficult for Lafayette to stop seeing his psychologist, Dr. Vernon? What does Dr. Vernon mean when he says Lafayette has "...done all the work [he] needed to do..." and that he "...was gonna be okay" (88)? What does it mean to be "okay"?
5. What role does each of the brothers play in their family? Charlie says he is the "bad one" (103). Is there such a thing as a "good" child or a "bad" child? What defines a person?

Explore & Extend

Shining a Light on Stereotypes

How do stereotypes and assumptions play a role in the novel? Define *stereotype*. Discuss how stereotypes begin and how they continue. Why are they dangerous? What connotations do certain stereotypes carry? Why study stereotypes? How can they be fought against safely? How do stereotypes affect their victims? Read pages 8-11 in the novel and the poem "Sure You Can Ask Me a Personal Question" by Diane Burns. What stereotypes do the characters in each hold? Infer what Woodson seems to be saying about stereotypes and assumptions people make about others compared with what Burns seems to be saying. Summarize their main ideas. List the similarities and differences on a Venn diagram. Then discuss the different strategies and techniques the writers use to convey their ideas. Which genre do you find more effective—a novel or a poem? Why?

R.CCR.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Totem Pole Symbolism

Lafayette thinks about the hierarchy of totem poles when he is struggling to get along with Newcharlie (10). At your school library and/or media center, learn more about totem poles: the symbolism associated with them, why people carved them, and the vertical hierarchy. Have students brainstorm the elements of their own lives that are most important to them and construct their own totem pole with whatever materials they feel suit their ideas and symbols. Students then write an informational piece that explains the significance of the aspects of their lives they included on their totem poles and of the vertical arrangement of each. Have students present their totem poles to the class or create a gallery in the library.

W.CCR.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Reading vs. Listening

Child poverty is sadly universal and is a theme in many of Woodson's novels. Read pages 61-67. Then listen to the NPR piece *7 Kids, 1 Apartment*. Analyze how the power of reading fiction compares with the power of listening to a nonfiction audio story. How does each affect the audience and make them feel? What strategies does Woodson use in her writing to impact the reader? What tools are used in the audio piece? What are the advantages and disadvantages to each? What does Woodson seem to be saying about poverty, how it is affecting her characters, and if there is an escape? What does Jairo Gomez seem to be saying about poverty, how it is affecting him and his family, and whether there are avenues to escape it? Have students research child poverty and create their own piece that helps inform; allow them to choose which medium they find most effective to convey their message.

R.CCR.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

Photo Project

Photographs of Mama play such a role in Lafayette's life. Why are they so important to him? Have students create a photo essay where they focus on one topic that holds significance for them. They intersperse photos within a written piece that tells a story or conveys a message or emotion. They may want to only write about one important photograph or create a collage. Bring in and write about your own special photo and share with your students!

W.CCR.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

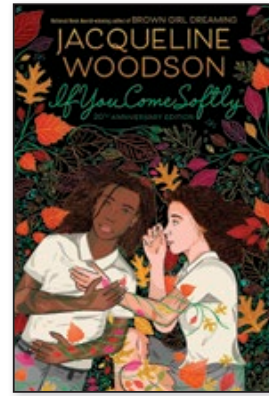
Coretta Scott King Author Award

2014 LA Times Book Prize

If You Come Softly

An emotional story of two teenagers from different worlds. Their relationship blooms just in time for it to be taken away. This story delves into issues of family and race in a way that grips the reader without letting go. This Romeo and Juliet retelling is sure to be relevant in today's world.

- ✓ Family Dynamics
- ✓ Race and Religion
- ✓ Realistic Fiction



HL570L

20th Anniversary Edition

Dive in & Discuss

1. How are Jeremiah and Ellie alike? How are they different? Discuss the different reactions they get from people when they find out about their relationship (i.e., Jeremiah's mother, Anne, the ladies in the park). This book was written twenty years ago. Do you think the reactions would be the same today? Why or why not?
2. What major events have shaped Jeremiah and Ellie's lives? Do you think these events affect the relationships they make? Why or why not?
3. Why does Jeremiah's father tell him not to run in Central Park? What literary device is Woodson using here? How does her use of this technique affect the reader in the story? How does it make us feel? How did you feel during this scene? Why?
4. Jeremiah's mother asks, "Did anyone ask you if you're on scholarship?" Why does she ask this question? What are other times in the book that Jeremiah notices stereotypes? How do you think this affects him?

Explore & Extend

Open the Discussion

Reading this book will certainly begin a discussion in the classroom about race and racism. It is important to have a classroom culture that is supportive for all students. Establishing a safe judgment-free zone is key to a successful discussion. The *New York Times* article below offers suggestions and supplemental material to help begin and guide the discussions.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/27/learning/lesson-plans/first-encounters-with-race-and-racism-teaching-ideas-for-classroom-conversations.html>

Challenge students to interview someone that they know about their experiences with race and racism. What is their story? How did it make them feel and how has it shaped who they are today? This topic is sensitive, but exploring it in the safety of the classroom will bring a new level of understanding to the journey of Jeremiah and Ellie and to real-life race-related issues in our world.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Protest Persuasion

Although this book was written twenty years ago, the topics in this story are extremely relevant today. Certain groups in America have historically been—and often still are—discriminated against and persecuted, and individuals among and outside of these victimized groups have spoken up to make their voices heard and to make change. Research groups of people who have been or are being persecuted or discriminated against. How did/do people stand up and protest against this discrimination? What techniques are used by these individual protestors? Compare protest strategies of different groups or individuals from history and in the present. See below for some examples in history to get you started. Which strategies do you find most effective? Explain. Have you ever protested? Would you ever? Why or why not? How do Jeremiah and Ellie face blatant racism? Do you think they are attempting to make change or to protest? If yes, how? Do you think it is working? Why or why not? Write a persuasive essay comparing two protest strategies used by protesters. Be sure to include what they are/were protesting and which techniques you think are the most effective and why.

Top 10 American Protest Movements

http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2096654_2096653_2096692,00.html

9 Famous Acts of Protest

(Be sure to preview the videos on this site ahead of time and follow your school's policy on obtaining parental permission for students to view any disturbing content.)

<https://www.historyandheadlines.com/9-famous-acts-protest/>

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Poetry Connection

The poem "If You Come Softly" by Audre Lorde is mentioned throughout the book. The book is even named after it! Read the poem in its entirety and have students discuss some possible meanings and how they connect to Jeremiah and Ellie's story. Encourage students to analyze the lines that may have been the inspiration for this story. What do you think these lines mean? What images do you see when you read them? Why might Woodson have chosen to allude to this poem in her book? What mood, theme and/or imagery is present in both pieces of writing?

<https://hellopoetry.com/poem/18761/if-you-come-softly/>

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

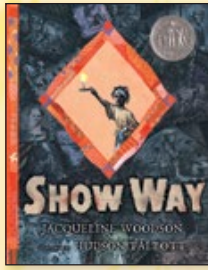
Star-crossed Lovers

There are many similarities between Romeo and Juliet and Jeremiah and Ellie, but there are also many differences. Help students build some background knowledge about Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. How are the stories alike? How are they different? Encourage students to dig deeper and think beyond the "right there" answers. Ask students to find quotes, character traits, setting similarities, and themes that connect the two stories.

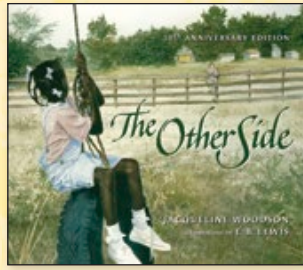
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4 Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS & LIBRARIANS

PICTURE BOOKS



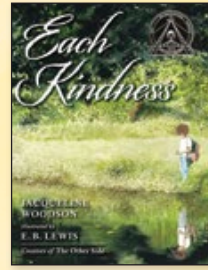
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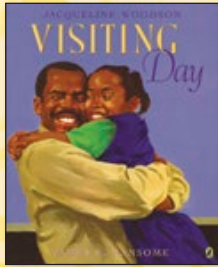
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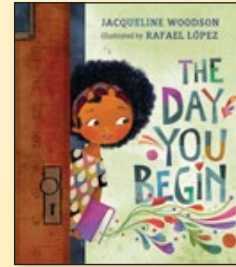
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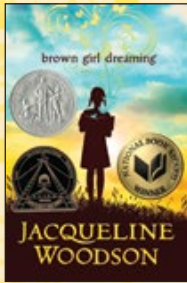


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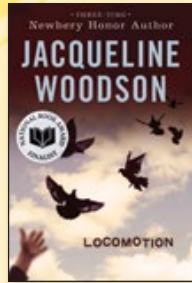


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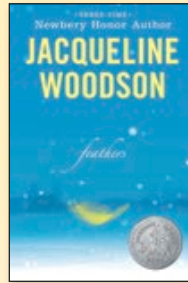
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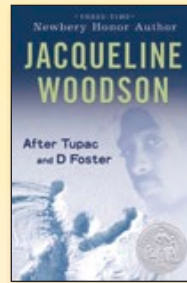
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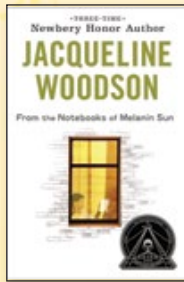
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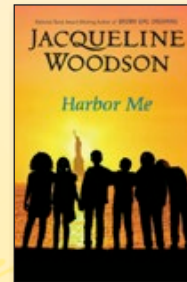
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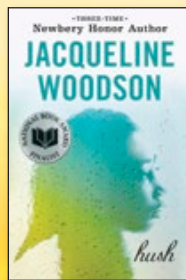


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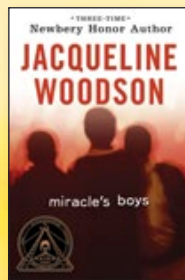
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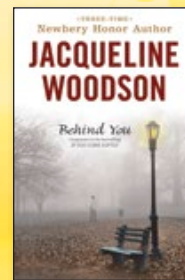
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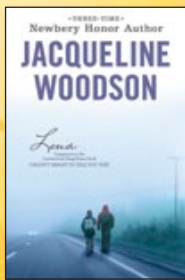
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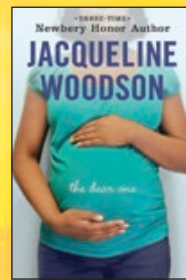
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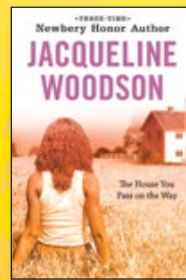
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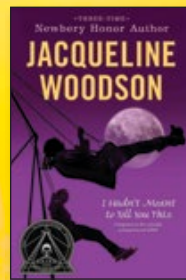
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