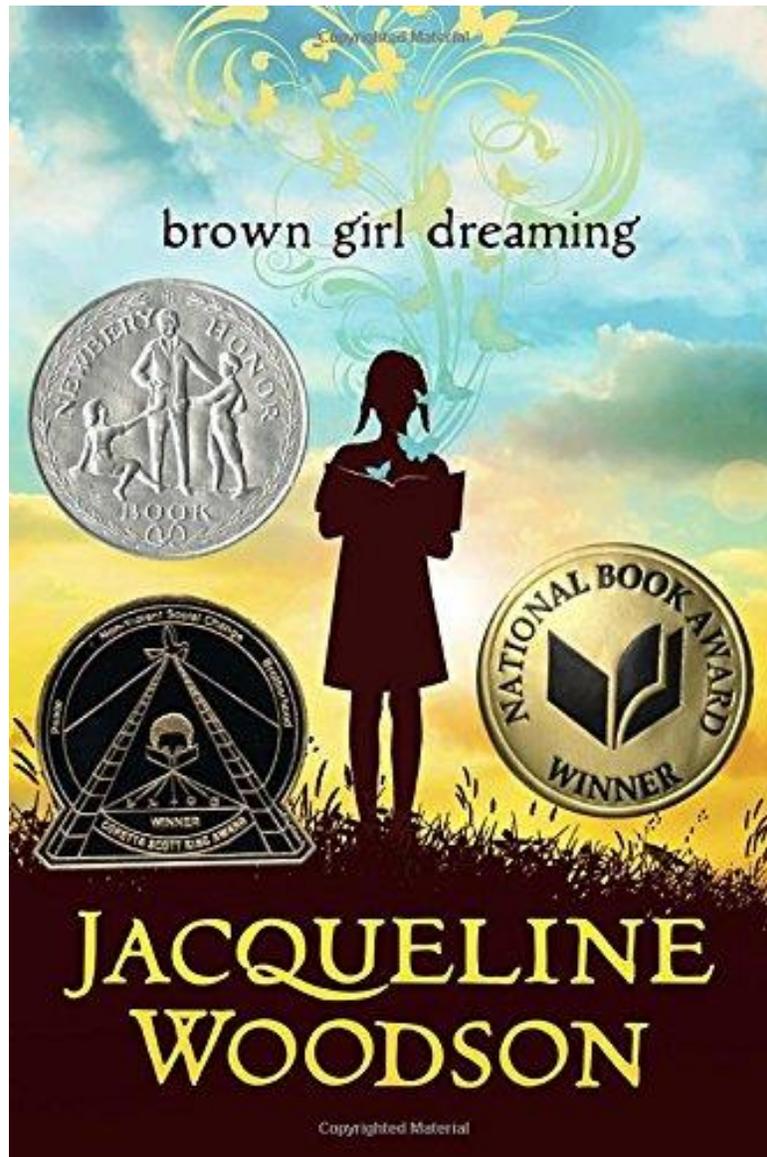


Resources for *Brown Girl Dreaming*



IN-CLASS INTRODUCTION

This lesson is designed to provide students with a one-class introduction to the book. The lesson can be used to start off a class reading of the text, or to encourage them to read it independently.

As a recipient of *One Book* resources, the Free Library requires that you devote one class period to introducing *Brown Girl Dreaming* to students, either using this lesson or your own plan.

Introduction Option #1

1. Let students know they are going to be meeting a character named Miss Bell. Take notes or just collect ideas in your head: what kind of person is she?
2. Play the video of Woodson reading the poem:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5P3Y06co54>
3. Discuss: What kind of neighbor is Ms. Bell? Who are the marchers, and what are they marching for? Is Ms. Bell a good person for staying home? Why does she make the choices that she does?

Introduction Option #2

1. Ask students to write four statements using the following three words as an opener:

"I am born"

Give them additional prompts: WHERE were they born? WHAT time of day, what day of the year, what year? WHO lives where they are born? WHAT happens there? HOW do they relate to that place now?

2. Read the first poem of the book. Where was Woodson born? What does she need the reader to know about her place in the world?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

From Penguin's Guide to Jacqueline Woodson: http://www.penguin.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Woodson_Guide_15_6p_WEB.pdf

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?

SUGGESTED ANALYTICAL & CREATIVE ASSESSMENTS

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?

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.

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.

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!

ONLINE RESOURCES

LESSON PLANS & RESOURCES

The Classroom Bookshelf

Incredibly comprehensive list of lesson ideas dealing with poetry, thematic elements, and current events, as well as a long list of links to interviews and reviews.

<http://www.theclassroombookshelf.com/2014/12/brown-girl-dreaming/>

Developing Writers Curriculu

A four-unit series of lessons that focus on analysis, creation, and performing of poetry.

<http://developingwriters.net/resources/syllabi/brown-girl-dreaming-sample-syllabus/>

Exploring Perspectives on Desegregation using Brown Girl Dreaming

A two-day lesson that encourages students to explore a larger issue in the civil rights era by using both content from the book and outside poetry.

<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/exploring-perspectives-desegregation-using-31133.html>

MULTIMEDIA

Video of Woodson Reading “Miss Bell and the Marchers”

A two-minute video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5P3Y06co54>

Code Switch Interview

Thirty-Seven minutes, including discussion of growing up as a Jehovah’s witness, coming out as gay to her family, and growing up up in the segregated South before moving to New York:

<http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2014/12/10/369736205/jacqueline-woodson-on-growing-up-coming-out-and-saying-hi-to-strangers>

Meet the Author Series

Five short videos, 3-5 minutes in length, where Woodson discusses her inspiration for writing about characters underrepresented in literature.

https://www.teachingbooks.net/author_collection.cgi?id=50&mid=90&a=1