Brown Girl Dreaming

Written by Jacqueline Woodson

Her website is: https://www.jacquelinewoodson.com/

Book Talk by Ivy Moore

Professor Warner: English 145

**About the Author**

Jacquelin Woodson is an African American author who was born in Columbus, Ohio; February 13, 1963. Then Woodson was raised in South Carolina and Brooklyn when her family moved. She grew up in a religious household mainly reading the Bible and Koran. Jacquelin is best known for her novels, *Miracle boys*, her award-winning titles *brown girl dreaming, After Tupac and D Foster, Feathers, and Show Away.* Woodson focuses her literary works in children and adolescent genres. When asked, “Why does she love writing?”, her response is, “Because it makes me happy. Even when the words are slow in coming and the story seems all lopsided, writing keeps me happy.”

**Summary of *brown girl dreaming***

This novel is an autobiography of the author Jacquelin Woodson. It is based off her childhood growing up during the peak of the Civil Rights Movement. During this time, Jacqueline’s mother (Mary Ann) leaves her father (Jack) and moves with her parents to South Carolina. Where she then decides to leave again, but this time to New York, where she explores and ponders if she could make a life there for her and her kids. Leaving her two kids Jacqueline and Hope behind for her parents to raise for the time being. During the duration of this time Jacquelin and her brother Hope become Jehovah Witness just like there grandmother. Her mother returns from New York notifying her parents that she is pregnant again, also that she is taking Jacquelin and Hope back to New York as well. When they first arrive to New York Jacquelin is having a hard time adjusting compared to her brother Hope who is doing just fine. She struggles with reading and writing but expresses how much she loves to do both. Jacquelin also meets a Puerto Rican girl named Maria who soon becomes her best friend. She then learns to appreciate being in New York with her new best friend Maria. The last part of the book Jacquelin discovers the death of her grandfather who she was very close with also that her Uncle Robert is sent to prison. She also learns more about the Civil Rights Movement, The Black Power Movement, and Feminism. Lastly, Jacquelin discovers that she wants to become a writer.

**Significant Quotes**

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| “As the switch raises dark welts on my brother’s legs  Dell and I look on  Afraid to open our mouths. Fearing the South  Will slip out or  Into them” (69). | This specific moment in the novel expresses Jacquelin’s feelings of not having a true home. Given the fact that her and her family moved place to place resulting in having strong accents. Mainly Southern accents, and having a Southern accent can be seen as low class making it harder for her and her family to fit in. Although Hope is the only one physically hurt, having to constantly watch her Southern characteristics and language exaggerates her feelings towards moving. |
| “*We are not afraid to die,*Maria and I shout, fist high,  *for what we believe in.*  But both of us know – we’d rather keep believing  And live.” (303). | At this important moment in the novel, Jacquelin realizes that what everyone is fighting for is life or death. One thing she does not understand is why people have to put their lives on the line for basic human rights. |
| “At the fabric store, we are not Colored  or Negro. We are not thieves or shameful  or something to be hidden away.  At the fabric store, we’re just people.” (90-91). | During Jacquelin’s childhood she has witnessed being mistreated for the color of her skin. Her and her grandmother usually decide not to go around many stores, because they face discrimination. In this moment, the fabric stores mean more to her, because she and her grandmother are treated just as equally there. |

***Resistance* in the Classroom**

**How to use this book in a classroom:**

1. Teachers could take this opportunity to discuss real-life situations, and have their students journal their thoughts and opinions.
2. Students could also write about a topic given in the novel to further expand their knowledge. Topics such as the Civil Rights Movement, Black Panther Party, Feminism, Riots, and etc.
3. Teachers can also take the opportunity to work on a poetry unit to let students express how they feel in their day to day life in modern day America.
4. Students can work in groups to present they would “write back” to Woodson during her time era (1960’s).

**Category of Books that *brown girl dreaming*** **fits from *Adolescents* in the Search for Meaning:**

* Chapter 4: Real Life Experiences
* Chapter 6: Identity, Discriminations, Struggles with Decisions

**Why should Teens read this book?**

1. Students can comprehend the Civil Rights Movement from a different perspective.
2. The book is very easy to read and the language is straight forward; the book is written in free verse poetry. (Exeter quality #8)
3. The book is more engaging with the storytelling
4. Students may be able to relate to the book with different experiences. (Exeter quality #3)

**Text Complexity**

**Quantitative:** **Lexile Range**: 990L**| ATOS Level**: 5.3|**Interest Level**: 4th - 8th grade **|**