

## HOW TO START YOUR OWN BOOK CLUB

Think it would be hard to start your own book club? Think again!  
All you need are some friends who are as excited about  
the books they read as you are and a little bit of organization.

### HERE ARE A FEW TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED:

#### The best way to find people to be in your book club is to ask your friends.

Think of all the people you know who like to read, and ask them to join. If you still don't feel like you have enough people, ask each of your friends to bring someone else. You can usually get a good discussion going with 6–8 people, but any number that is comfortable for you will work. If you're having trouble finding enough cool people to form your club, check with your school, local library, or bookstore to see if there's a group that you can join.

#### Figure out when and where you want to meet.

Some groups meet once a month, some meet every other month. You could get together at someone's house, in a park, on the beach, or in your school's library. If it sounds too official and overwhelming to decide all the "wheres" and "whens" right now, don't worry! It's YOUR group so YOU get to make all the decisions. All you have to do is get together once, and you can work out the rest of the details later.

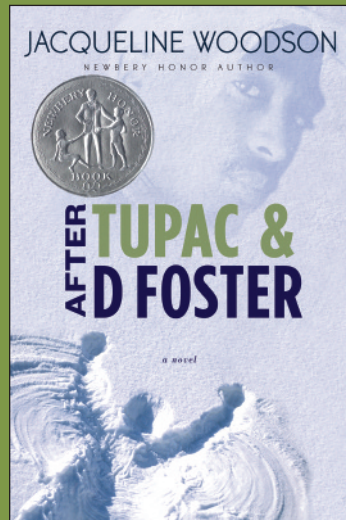
#### Decide how you will choose books, and how the discussions will be run.

Maybe you have a favorite author that you and your friends would like to focus on. Or maybe you want to take turns picking your favorite book. Maybe one person likes to talk and would like to lead the discussion, or maybe you would rather just get together and talk about the books you are reading. If you get stuck, you can often find discussion questions online (try the publisher's website) or at your local library or bookstore.

**The most important thing to remember is that there's no right or wrong way to have a book club. Do what you're comfortable with and always have fun, and your group will be a success!**

For more discussion guides to get your group going, visit  
[www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians](http://www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians)

## Everyone has a Big Purpose . . .



### After Tupac & D Foster

by Jacqueline Woodson  
978-0-399-24654-8 • \$15.99  
Ages 10 & Up

★ "With Tupac's name and picture on the cover, this slim volume will immediately appeal to teens, and the emotions and high-quality writing make it a book well worth recommending."

—*School Library Journal*, starred review

Newbery Honor  
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## DISCUSSION GUIDE

JACQUELINE WOODSON

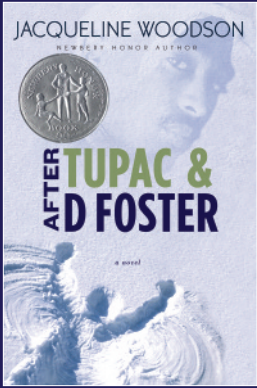
NEWBERY HONOR AUTHOR



# AFTER TUPAC & D FOSTER

*a novel*

## ABOUT THE BOOK



The unnamed narrator and her best friend, Neeka, live in a quiet and boring Queens neighborhood, with strict parents always in their business. When D Foster shows up in their lives, they are jealous of her freedom to roam the city, but D, in turn, wishes she had a real home like theirs, not the life of a foster child she currently leads. D arrives a few months before Tupac Shakur is shot the first time, and leaves the summer before he dies, and in those years, framed by Tupac and his music, the three African American girls go from age 11 to 13, become steadfast friends, and begin to find the Big Purpose in their lives.

In a story of one neighborhood and three friends, Woodson creates memorable characters who dream of getting on in the outside world, including Jayjones' dream of going to the NBA, Tash's yearning for release from prison, and Neeka's thinking she might want to be a college professor someday. The girls listen to Tupac, jump double Dutch, and even sneak away from the block to visit an eerily beautiful amphitheater, an early foray into the outside world awaiting them. It's a tale of home, family and friends, of dreams, the Big Purpose of life, and just trying to keep on. And behind it all are Tupac and others "singing and rapping our stories."

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



JACQUELINE WOODSON was born in Columbus, Ohio, and grew up in Greenville, South Carolina, and Brooklyn, New York. She is one of the most honored writers in the world of children's literature, having won three Newbery Honors, a Coretta Scott King author award, two Coretta Scott King author honors, two National Book Award nominations, and the Margaret A. Edwards Award for lifetime achievement in the world of young adult literature. Jacqueline currently lives in Brooklyn, New York, with her family and travels widely to speak in schools and at conferences. Visit her at <http://www.jacquelinewoodson.com>.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Explain the characters' varying reactions to the shooting of Tupac Shakur.
- Explain why D is so mesmerized by Tupac in chapter one.
- Explain how, in chapter one, Neeka and the narrator want what D has, and D wants what they have.
- How does the narrator feel connected to D yet jealous of her, too?
- How do Neeka's and the narrator's mothers try to protect them?
- What do you think the narrator means: "Some days D smiled at me and felt like my missing half"? (page 43)
- On page 57, Jayjones says of Tupac, "How come I don't even know him and he be feeling like a brother to me?" What does Tupac seem to mean to Jayjones, D, the narrator and her mother?
- Describe the amphitheater in chapter 11 and explain why the narrator is so moved by being there.
- Describe Tash's experience and how he tries to be strong for the rest of his family. How do we know that Tash is unlikely to have committed the crime he was found guilty of?
- Why, would you say, does the author never name the narrator?
- The narrator says, "Maybe that was *our* Big Purpose—to figure ourselves on out." (page 134) By the end of the story, are any of the characters closer to finding their Big Purpose?
- The rope the girls use for double Dutch is a powerful metaphor for connectedness. Can you identify other forces for connection and wholeness in this block in Queens where Neeka and the narrator live?
- Strong women are important to Woodson's novels. Identify the strong women in *After Tupac & D Foster* and explain what makes them strong.
- Why, do you think, is D Foster the character most affected by the songs of Tupac Shakur, and most affected by the shootings and his death?
- The novel's title is *After Tupac & D Foster*; what do you feel will happen next for Neeka and the narrator? How did D Foster affect them and their way of seeing the world?
- In "If My Homie Calls," Tupac says, "Time goes on, and everybody grows/Grew apart, had to part, went our own ways." Explain how these lines could be the theme of the novel.

## ACTIVITIES

- Listen to "Brenda's Got A Baby" and "Dear Mama" and read the lyrics. Explain the connection that D Foster feels with these songs.
- Read Woodson's award-winning novel *Miracle's Boys*. Compare and contrast the relationship of the boys in it with the relationship of the girls in *After Tupac & D Foster*.
- Research the various aspects of Tupac Shakur's life referred to in the novel and write a brief report: why he was shot; his early days with Digital Underground; his mother and the Black Panthers; and the second shooting.
- Can you find statistics regarding incarceration rates by race? Research Marian Wright Edelman's reference to the "cradle to prison pipeline" and "America's new apartheid."
- One theme of the novel is how the characters, including Tupac, are "just trying to keep on." Select two or three characters to write about to demonstrate this theme.
- Woodson writes evocatively about this Queens neighborhood and the people in it. Write a portrait of your own neighborhood and the people in it.
- Reread page 22 and write an "I Remember" poem about memories of a person or place in your neighborhood. You might start each line with "I Remember" or let the title set up the idea. Each line should be a separate memory.
- Write a description of a person you know or observe, using the description of D on page 24 as a model.
- Write a journal entry D might have written, reflecting on the meaning Tupac's songs had for her, especially "Brenda's Got A Baby," "Dear Mama," and "If My Homie Calls."
- Reread chapter 11 and use it as a model for writing your own memory of a special moment.
- Read Woodson's picture book *Visiting Day* and compare it to the scene in the novel when Neeka's family and the narrator visit Tash in prison.
- Visit Jacqueline Woodson's website at [www.jacquelinewoodson.com](http://www.jacquelinewoodson.com), and use the "teaching books" link to videos of the author talking about her work.