

Miracle's Boys

1 Have you ever known anyone to change so dramatically as Charlie/Newcharlie? What died in Charlie when his mother died? Why is Lafayette not affected in this same way?

2 Is it right for Tyree to sacrifice his life by not going to MIT in order to care for his brothers?

3 A lot is left unsaid between Lafayette and his brothers. They even have a shorthand for saying I love you ("brother to brother"). Why do you suppose this is? Are there some things that are just too painful to talk about? Or does the story show that not talking about sadness and hurt only makes them worse?

Locomotion

1 Why do you think the author chose to write the book in poetry form? In what ways does the poetry add to the story? Is there any way that it detracts? How would the story have been different if it were written in prose?

2 How is this poem on p. 51 exemplary of Lonnie's life in general? Is there only bitterness/sadness here? Or can you see traces of something else? If so, what?

3 Lonnie says he doesn't like to write poetry that requires a structure, but prefers free verse, "when you can write anything you want." (p. 67) Why? What about his life might make free verse more appealing to Lonnie?

Hush

1 If you were in Toswiah's dad's shoes, would you tell or not? Do you think he did the right thing considering how it affects his family, how much they change?

2 Have you ever been in a similar position where not telling seemed just as bad as telling? What did you do in the end?

3 When looking back on the entire experience, Toswiah concludes, "I think in the middle of everything, God changed his mind. And, maybe, just maybe, came up with a better idea." (p. 180) In light of all that she's gone through and all that she's lost, how can she say this?

Feathers

1 Although she obviously loves her brother deeply, there are times when Frannie seems jealous of Sean because his deafness makes him special. Even Lila is special to her family in a way that Frannie can never be. What is Frannie's unique role in her family? What are her own special qualities/strengths?

2 Although the world views Sean as handicapped, Frannie sees her brother as gifted and strong. In what ways is this true? Can the same be said about skin color? What strengths and/or advantages are there in belonging to a "minority"?

3 From the appearance of Jesus Boy to Samantha's fire and brimstone church, Christianity is a subject that is sprinkled throughout the story. What is the role of religion in the story? What is the difference between religious faith and the hope of Emily Dickinson's poem? Are they mutually exclusive or can one play a part in the other?

4 Near the end of the novel, Frannie must make a list of the things she and her classmates have in common. One of the things she writes is, "We all walked in the snow at least once this winter. Maybe a hundred times." Symbolically, what do you think this really means? Why do you think the novel is set in the winter?

HOW TO START YOUR OWN READING GROUP:

THINK IT WOULD BE HARD TO START YOUR OWN READING GROUP?

All you need is a little bit of organization and some friends who are as excited about books as you are.

HERE ARE A FEW TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED:

• THE BEST WAY TO FIND PEOPLE TO BE IN YOUR READING GROUP 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 reading group, check with your local library or bookstore to see if there's a group that you can join.

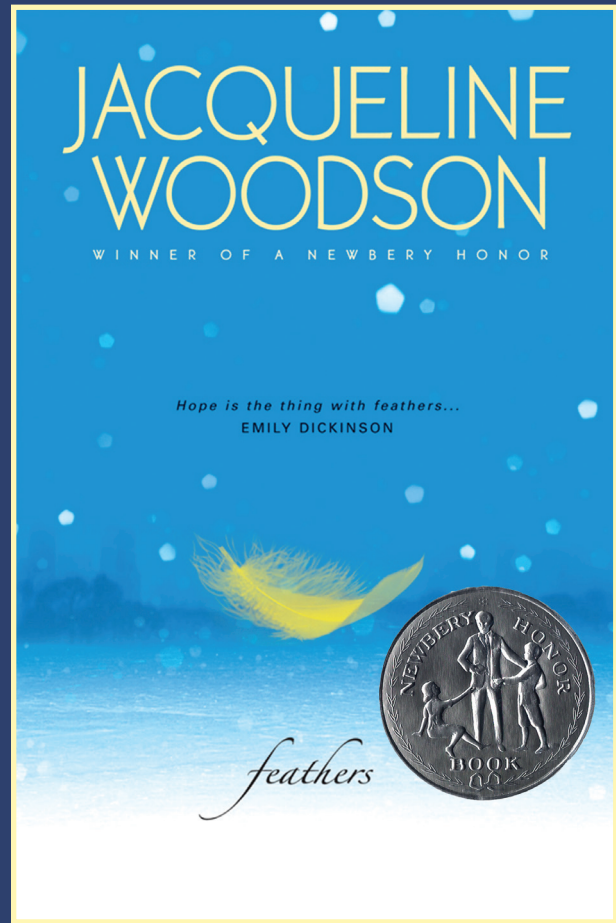
• FIGURE OUT WHEN AND WHERE YOU WANT TO MEET.

Some groups meet once a month, some meet every other month. You could get together at someone's house, in a park, or on the beach. If it sounds too official and overwhelming to decide all the "wheres" and "whens" right now, don't worry! It's YOUR group and 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.

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



READING GROUP GUIDE

ANOTHER LYRICAL MASTERPIECE FROM AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

Jacqueline Woodson

GET TO KNOW



Jacqueline Woodson

Born on February 12th in Columbus, Ohio, Jacqueline Woodson grew up in Greenville, South Carolina, and in Brooklyn, New York. Jacqueline graduated from college with a B.A. in English. She now writes full-time and has recently received the Margaret A. Edwards Award for lifetime achievement in writing for young adults. Her other awards include two Newbery Honors, a Coretta Scott King Award, three Coretta Scott King Honors, two National Book Award finalists, and the Los Angeles Times Book Prize. Although she spends most of her time writing, Jacqueline enjoys spending time with her friends and family (including her daughter and son) and sewing. Jacqueline currently resides in Brooklyn, New York.

FEATHERS

BY JACQUELINE WOODSON

Winner of a Newbery Honor

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Feathers is set in the 1970s. Although the civil rights movement has already happened, there still seems to be a deep divide between blacks and whites in the story.

- In what ways have times changed from the 70s to today?
- How have they stayed the same?

"There weren't white people on this side of the highway. You didn't notice until one appeared. And then you saw all the brown everywhere. And then you started to wonder." (p. 16)

- Are there any parts of your own life that are segregated?
- Have you ever been in a situation where you were the only one of something (the only person of your color/ religion/gender)? If so, how did this make you feel?

At one point when thinking about her neighborhood, Frannie says, "We have everything we need here." Yet she also points out that it is an all-black community.

- Do you think it's an advantage or disadvantage to live only with people who are like yourself?

Frannie doesn't seem to mind living the way she does, but her brother, Sean, thinks about building bridges that would close the gap between their neighborhood and the white neighborhood.

- Why is it so important to Sean to fight for this change?
- What does Sean want to do to close the gap between the two neighborhoods?

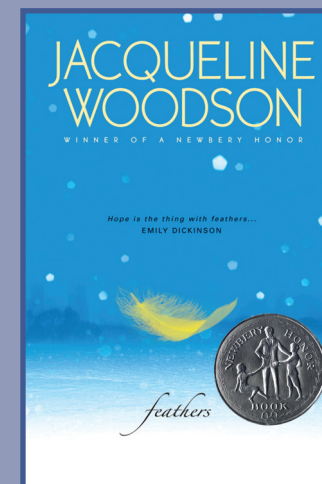
Trevor is the meanest kid in Frannie's class, but she is also able to see glimpses of another side of him. She says, "I saw that, even though he was mean all the time, the sun still stopped and colored him and warmed him—like it did to everyone else." (p. 21)

- Do you know anyone like Trevor? Are you, like Frannie, ever able to see a more sympathetic side of him or her?

FOR MORE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS,
SEE ATTACHED BOOKMARK.

JACQUELINE WOODSON

FEATHERS



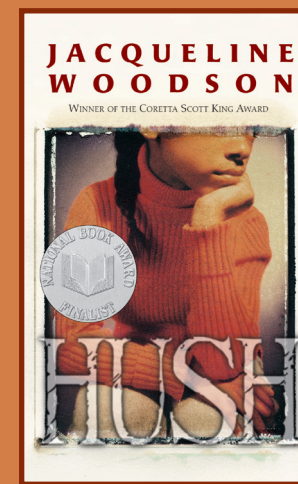
Hardcover: 978-0-399-23989-2
\$15.99 (\$20.00 CAN)

It's been a long and snowy winter for Frannie and her classmates, and studying poetry can make it seem endless. "Hope is the thing with feathers..." That's how one poem begins, but Frannie is not really sure what to make of it until a boy as white and quiet as the falling snow steps into her world.

After a winter like this one, nothing will ever be the same again . . .

JACQUELINE WOODSON

HUSH

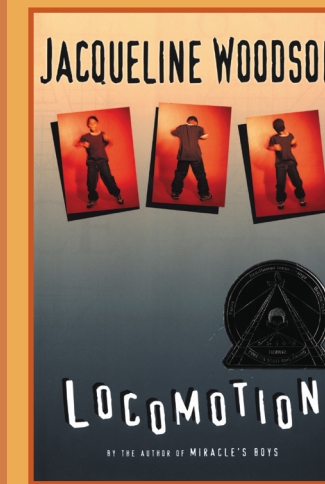


Hardcover: 978-0-399-23114-8
\$15.99 (\$24.00 CAN)
Paperback: 978-0-14-240600-7
\$5.99 (\$8.50 CAN)

Can you imagine having to abandon your entire life? That's what happens to Toswiah Green when her father decides to testify against a fellow police officer, forcing her family into the witness protection program. Nothing is the same once they go into hiding: Toswiah's father spends his days staring out the window, her mom buries herself in new found religion, and even her sister is secretly planning on leaving as soon as she can. Toswiah is left to struggle on her own as she attempts to determine who she is now that she has lost everything she has ever known.

JACQUELINE WOODSON

LOCOMOTION



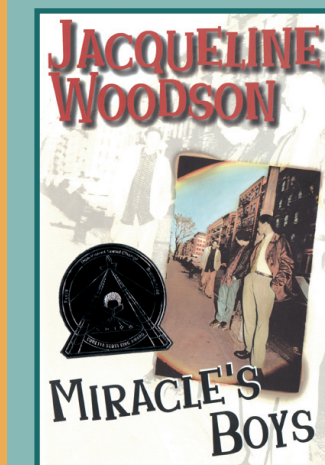
Hardcover: 978-0-399-23115-5
\$15.99 (\$24.00 CAN)
Paperback: 978-0-14-240149-1
\$5.99 (\$8.99 CAN)

When 11-year-old Lonnie Motion discovers poetry, he suddenly has a whole new way to tell the world about his life, his friends, his little sister, Lili, and even his foster mom, Miss Edna, who started out crabby but isn't so bad after all.

Funny, sad, and always lyrical, this is a loving story of one boy's quest to put back together his fractured family.

JACQUELINE WOODSON

MIRACLE'S BOYS



Hardcover: 978-0-399-23113-1
\$15.99 (\$23.50 CAN)
Paperback: 978-0-14-240602-1
\$5.99 (\$8.50 CAN)

Like in many families, a lot goes unsaid in Lafayette's house, which makes him a boy with many unanswered questions clattering around in his head: Why did Mama have to die? Why does my own brother hate me so much and when did he become such a stranger? How are we all supposed to get by when we seem to have so little? What Lafayette needs to remember is that he is one of Miracle's boys, three brothers who may be struggling against pretty large odds, but who, if they lean on each other, will survive.