

HOW TO START YOUR OWN BOOK CLUB

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

This is another one that sounds a little scary but totally isn't. 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 reading group. 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

Lonnie's growing understanding of the world
can expand our own as we read his words.



Locomotion

978-0-399-23115-5 (HC) • \$15.99
978-0-14-240149-1 (PB) • \$5.99
Ages: 10 & up • Grade 5 & up

- National Book Award Finalist
- Coretta Scott King Honor
- ALA Notable
- ALA Best Book for Young Adults



Peace, Locomotion

978-0-399-24655-5 (HC) • \$15.99
Ages: 10 & up • Grade 5 & up

Readers get to know Lonnie Collins Motion, aka Locomotion, in these two novels about family, friends, love and loss. In *Locomotion*, eleven-year-old Lonnie moves in with a new foster mother, Miss Edna. At first, Miss Edna always tells him to be quiet. She's not the same foster mother that his younger sister, Lili, has, and she's certainly not the mother or father that he lost in a house fire when he was seven. As Lonnie adjusts to change, he gets encouragement from his fifth grade teacher to keep writing poetry. His poems let Lonnie sort through his feelings about Miss Edna, school, and being separated from his sister. They are also a way for him to curl up with his memories of his parents. What Lonnie begins learning about himself and his circumstances deepens when he is twelve in *Peace, Locomotion*. He writes a series of letters to give to Lili when they are living together again so she can have a record of the events of their lives. Lonnie notes the small and big parts of his sixth grade year that add up to a broadened sense of the meaning of friendship, what makes a family, and the consequences of war. In both *Locomotion* and *Peace, Locomotion*, Jacqueline Woodson presents an engaging character whose personal contemplations are universal in their honesty.



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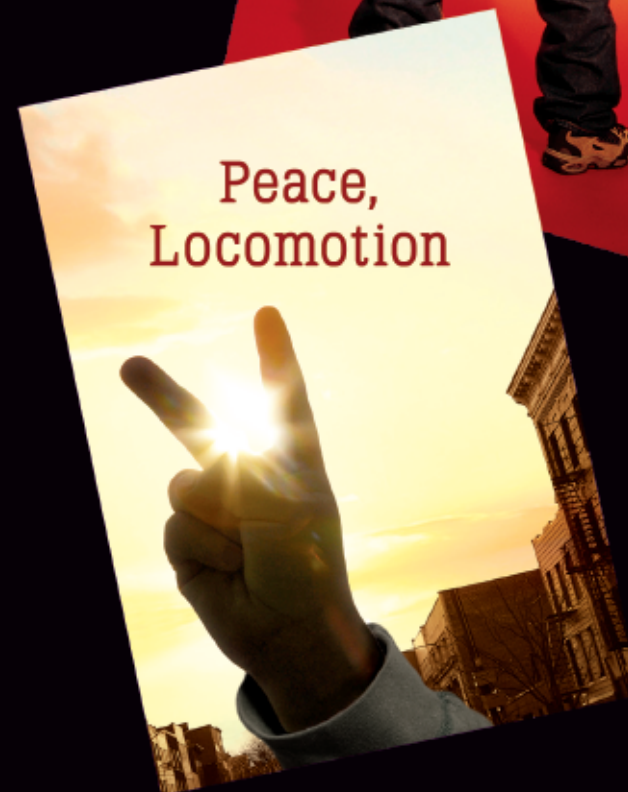
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978-0-399-25138-2

DISCUSSION GUIDE

NATIONAL
BOOK AWARD
FINALIST

LOCOMOTION



Jacqueline Woodson

ABOUT THE BOOKS



In *Locomotion*, Jacqueline Woodson presents Lonnie Collins Motion, aka Locomotion, in his own words. An eleven-year-old trying to sort out his emotions when he begins living with his new foster mother, separate from his younger sister, his world is opened by his teacher, who tells him he is a poet. Lonnie writes poems that tell the truth about his life, his sadness and his family, expressing his feeling about his loss, his pain, his friends and his determination to be together again with his sister one day.



In *Peace, Locomotion*, Lonnie is discouraged from writing poetry because his new teacher tells him he won't be a poet until he has published a book. But he still writes letters to his sister. Living in separate foster homes, he misses her. He decides to write her letters to record the events of their lives as they grow up. He also records memories from the "Before Time" when their parents were alive. Readers get to know more about Lonnie and how he becomes a part of his new foster family through the letters which he saves to give to his sister when they are together again. Lonnie's sixth grade year is full of expansion. His foster family has grown, his sister challenges his understanding about what "family" means, and his thoughts about the world begin to include war and its consequences.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Born in Columbus, Ohio, and raised in Greenville, South Carolina, and Brooklyn, New York, JACQUELINE WOODSON is a prolific author. She has won the Margaret A. Edwards Award for lifetime achievement in writing for young adults, two Newbery Honors, a Coretta Scott King author award, and two author honors, two National Book Award nominations, and many accolades. Besides her full-time career of writing, Jacqueline also enjoys reading, sewing, and spending time with family and friends. She lives with her family in Brooklyn, New York. Visit her at <http://www.jacquelinewoodson.com>.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Part I – Locomotion

- Describe Lonnie. What three words do you think say the most about him? Would you be friends with Lonnie? Explain.
- How did you feel about the tragedy of Lonnie's parents' deaths? Would you have felt differently if Lonnie were mean?

- Why is Ms. Marcus so important to Lonnie? Do you think she deserved a Teacher of the Year award? What are the qualities of a good teacher?

- What is Lonnie's experience of race? What do you think about his ideas in the poem "Commercial Break" on pages 12-13? What do you think this book says about race?

- Why do people laugh at Clyde in "New Boy" (page 29)? Have you experienced or witnessed a similar situation in which people laughed at you or someone else? How did you feel? What did you do? What could you have done?

- Why do you think Lili's foster mother is so watchful of Lonnie? Do you think she needs to be?

- Lonnie and Lili lose their parents. Eric has sickle cell disease. Do you feel the same for each of them and their situations? Explain.

- What do you think Rodney was doing before he came back to live with his mother? Can you relate to what he says about trees?

- At the end of *Locomotion*, Lonnie and Lili are together in the park. Lili says they're together because she gave him the Bible and told him to find God. Do you agree? Why do you think good things happen to people? Why do you think bad things happen to people?

- How does Lonnie change from the beginning of the story to the end?

Part II – Peace, Locomotion

- What is a family? Is family important? Explain. Clyde tells Lonnie that "There's all kinds of mamas" (page 35), Lili tells Lonnie that she wants the mama she used to have and the mama she has now (page 64). Lonnie is at first skeptical of their ideas about mothers. What do you think?

- Have you experienced a teacher like Ms. Cooper or Ms. Alina? Describe your experience. What do you think Rodney would be like as a teacher?

- Why would Miss Alina say to try to write, think or talk about one true thing every day (page 42)? Do you agree that this is a worthwhile goal?

- What do you imagine peace to be? Is Lonnie's idea about peace on page 77 possible: "everybody putting down their weapons and no more wars anywhere"?

- In one letter to Lili, Lonnie comments on wants and needs (page 88). What's the difference between a want and a need? What does Lonnie want? What does he need? What do you want? What do you need?

- Clyde is Lonnie's best friend. What are the qualities you look for in a friend or a best friend? Does everyone have to have a best friend? Why or why not?

- Consider Lonnie's poem "Little Things" on page 96. What does the poem mean to you? What little things are important to you?

- Miss Edna encourages Jenkins to be living life (page 111) and Lonnie writes to Lili that he wants to make sure she is living her life. What does it mean to be living life? Do you think you are living your life?

- What does the saying "sometimes you gotta laugh to keep from crying" mean (page 127)? Do you agree or disagree?

- If you could ask Lonnie one question, what would it be?

- What do you think happens to Lonnie? What do you imagine his life is like in ten years?

ACTIVITIES

- *Locomotion* introduces readers to Lonnie Collins Motion, an eleven-year-old who moves in with a foster mother in Brooklyn. Encouraged by his fifth grade teacher, Lonnie writes poems about whatever he thinks. Jacqueline Woodson offers us a character who can expand our own understanding of the world even as he grows and the dynamics change in his foster family. With his poetry he records his experiences, remembers his past, and sorts through his emotions as he begins his life with a foster mother, separate from his younger sister. Can you write a poem, remembering a certain time in your life?

- Lonnie tells his story through poems in the novel *Locomotion*. Did they all seem like poems to you? Explain. What is a poem? Which of Lonnie's poems did you like most? Explain.

- In *Peace, Locomotion*, Lonnie tells his story through letters. Can you write a letter that tells a story from events past? Be creative in your writing (i.e. vivid descriptions).

- In *Locomotion*, the poem "Visiting," Lonnie writes that sometimes he can't imagine living anywhere but with Miss Edna. Write a short essay on "What makes a place home?"

- In *Locomotion*, Ms. Marcus asks Angel, "Do you think poor people aren't happy?" (page 69). What do you think? Explain your answer. What are some things that make a person rich or poor?

- Is it important to have memories? Discuss why it is important to remember events, times and places. What do memories mean to you?

- Keep a journal. Remember things that happen on a daily basis. Write down your thoughts and feelings. At the end of the year, look back and see how much you have grown and developed emotionally throughout the year.