

Your Library Today



Mr. Breitsprecher's Edition

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Great Authors: Jacquelyn Woodson

When Ms. Woodson was young, she says she wrote on everything and everywhere. She chalked stories across sidewalks and penciled tiny tales in notebook margins. She loved watching words flower into sentences and sentences blossom into stories. She still does today.

As a child, she was a great storyteller, not "once upon a time" stories but fun, vivid made-up stories. She loved poetry too. In the fifth-grade, she wrote a poem about Dr. Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. that her teacher thought was too good – too good for a student to have written.

Eventually, Ms. Woodson was able to show her teacher that she had indeed written the poem, but she still describes this today as "lots of brouhaha." Ms. Woodson says it still surprises her when she walks into a bookstore and sees her name on a book's binder. While writing comes naturally to her, it still isn't always easy.

She says sometimes she sits at her desk for long hours and nothing comes to her. Then she remembers her fifth-grade teacher, the way her eyes lit up when she said "This is really good."

Remembering how others believe in her and her writing talents helps her start creating new stories again. Ms. Woodson enjoys writing.

Even when the words are slow in coming and the story isn't developing as she would like, writing keeps her happy. Over the years, she has written many books. Sometimes, long after finishing a book, she still thinks about the characters in them.

Some Book Awards that Jacquelyn Woodson Has Won

After Tupac and D Foster. Newbery Honor Medal, Publishers Weekly

Behind You. YALSA Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers, ALA Best Books for Young Adults

Coming on Home Soon. Caldecott Honor, ALA Notable

Feathers. Newbery Honor Medal, ALA Notable Books for Children

From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun. Margaret A. Edwards Award for Lifetime Achievement, Coretta Scott King Honor Book, ALA Best Book for Young Adults

Hush. ALA Best Book for Young Adults

If You Come Softly. Margaret A. Edwards Award for Lifetime Achievement, ALA Best Book for Young Adults

Locomotion. Coretta Scott King Honor Book

Miracle's Boys. Coretta Scott King Award, Margaret A. Edwards Award for Lifetime Achievement

Picture Books

Coming on Home Soon, Illustrated by EB Lewis. It is wartime, and women have to go to work while the men are off fighting. Ada Ruth's mama has a job in Chicago and she must leave Ada Ruth and Grandma behind for a while.

Our Gracie Aunt, Illustrated by Jon Muth. Johnson and his sister Beebee have to take care of themselves after their mother leaves. Then they're moved to the Aunt Gracie's house and things start getting better.

Show Way, Illustrated by Hudson Talbott. This is the first time I've written a book based on some of my own family history. "Show Ways", or quilts, once served as secret maps for freedom-seeking slaves. This is the story of seven generations of girls and women who were quilters and artists

and freedom fighters.

Sweet, Sweet Memory, Illustrated by Floyd Cooper. Sarah's grandfather was a gardener. When he dies, he lives behind his beliefs about the world and a harvest to help her remember him and know that the circle of life goes on and on.

The Other Side, Illustrated by E.B. Lewis. Two girls, Clover and Annie, become friends in a small, segregated town.

Visiting Day, Illustrated by James Ransome. A young girl looks forward to the day she gets to go visit her father. It only happens once a month and it's a very special day.

We Had A Picnic This Sunday Past, Illustrated by Diane Greenesid. Teeka and her grandmother go to the family picnic and boy! aren't the others who come something to talk about!!

Middle Grade Books by Jacquelyn Woodson

Feathers. “Feathers” takes place in the 1970s and begins when a boy walks into the classroom who is very different from the other kids there. Or maybe he isn’t so different...

Locomotion. Lonnie C. Motion has had some tough breaks in his life. But this fall, Lonnie’s fifth grade class is learning to write poetry and suddenly, Lonnie is finding the words to tell the world about his family, the fire that took his parents away, his little sister, his world.

Last Summer With Maizon. Margaret and Maizon are best friends. When Margaret’s father dies and Maizon gets accepted to a boarding school in Connecticut, Margaret wonders if life on Madison Street will ever be the same again.

Maizon At Blue Hill. Maizon Singh is one of the few black girls at an all-white boarding school. She doesn’t feel like she belongs there and misses Madison Street and the family and friends she left behind.

Between Madison And Palmetto. When Maizon returns to Brooklyn from Blue Hill, the boarding school she’s been attending, she’s not sure if she and Margaret will still be best friends.

Young Adult Books by Jacqueline Woodson

After Tupac and D Foster. The first time Tupac is shot, D Foster walks into the lives of Neeka and her best friend. From that point on, no one’s world is ever the same. D Foster lives with her foster mom who lets her

‘roam’ while Neeka and the narrator aren’t even allowed to leave their block. But the three soon realize they have a lot in common – including their love of Tupac – his lyrics, his life, the way he keeps on keeping on and this helps them move through the years between 11 and 13 in search of their Big Purpose even as the narrator’s brother is wrongly accused of a crime and gets sent to jail and D’s absent mom keeps disappointing her.

The Dear One. Rebecca is fifteen and pregnant and poor. Afeni is twelve, wealthy, spoiled, and doesn’t care to have a pregnant girl living in her house even if the girl is the daughter of her mother’s best friend from college. From day one, the girls hate each other and must figure out how to live under the same roof with each other and all of their opposing ideas.

The House You Pass On The Way. Evangeline (nickname Staggerlee) meets her adopted cousin Trout for the first time the summer they are both thirteen. The two girls form a strong friendship and learn a lot from each other about what it means to be the children of heroes and what it means to grow up in a world that isn’t tolerant.

Lena. When things get too bad at home, twelve year old Lena and her eight year old sister, Dion, runaway. Dressed as boys to make it easier for them on the road, they travel from Ohio to Kentucky looking for a safe place to call “home”.

I Hadn’t Meant To Tell You This. Marie and Lena are both motherless. Marie is black and well off. Lena is white and poor. And in the small town of Chauncey, Ohio blacks and whites don’t mix. But Lena and Marie become friends anyway. One of them has a terrible secret and the other must decide—Is it best to keep it? Or should she tell someone fast?

From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun. Thirteen year old Melanin Sun has a great life with his single mom. He feels like she’s the person he can

tell anything to. His friends think she’s beautiful and tease Melanin about how they’d love to go on dates with her. Then one day, his mother brings a white woman named Kristin home. Melanin dislikes Kristin the minute he meets her and because of her, his life with his mother will never be the same again.

Miracle’s Boys. Three brothers who are orphaned by the death of their mother, are trying to get by. Twelve year old Lafayette tells the story of what happens to him and his older brothers, fifteen year old Charlie and twenty-one year old Ty’ree, after Charlie comes home from a juvenile detention center where he has spent time for armed robbery.

If You Come Softly. If You Come Softly is about Jeremiah who is fifteen and black and Ellie who is fifteen and white. They meet at a private school and fall in love and then have to deal with how society treats them because they’re an interracial couple. It was inspired by a poem by Audre Lorde that begins:

If you come softly,
as the wind within the trees
you may hear what I hear
see what sorrow sees.

Behind You. Even after he dies, Jeremiah and the people he loved can’t seem to figure out how to move on. Told in vignettes, this is the story of two teenagers who suddenly lose each other.

Hush. When she is twelve, Toswiah and her older sister Cameron have to leave the place they’ve always known, change their identities and leave no trace of their past life. Toswiah becomes Evie. Her sister becomes Anna. In the new city, they have to reinvent themselves and figure out how to move on when just about everything they ever loved is behind them.