

Discussing *Brown Girl Dreaming* by Jacqueline Woodson

Resources gathered by NCTE's Committee Against Censorship 2026

Below are discussion questions for *Brown Girl Dreaming* gathered from a variety of online resources. The full resource guides are linked for more in-depth information on discussing and teaching the novel. We also encourage you to download NCTE's [book rationale](#).

ReadWriteThink ([link](#))

1. What are the different perspectives offered on living in a desegregating America?
2. Who seems to have obviously similar or different points of view?
3. Based on the poems, what might account for those similarities and differences?
4. What did you learn about the varying perspectives people might have held toward life in desegregating America?
5. How do these poems enhance or change your understanding of the Civil Rights movement and life in America at this time?

Facing History Guide ([link](#))

1. What are the legacies of the Jim Crow era, and how do they impact Jacqueline's sense of who she is and where she belongs?
2. What are the written and unwritten rules of society in *Brown Girl Dreaming*?
3. How does the memoir's moral universe (the setting) influence the characters' choices?
4. Do laws or do the hearts and minds of individuals play a greater role in creating a just and equal society?
5. How does our membership in various groups—families, religions, schools, neighborhoods—affect how others think about us? How does it affect how we think about ourselves?
6. What role do stories and imagination play in Jacqueline's life and how she comes to understand her world?
7. How can the acts of writing and storytelling influence the way we make sense of the world?

Penguin Random House Discussion Guide ([link](#); [updated guide](#) with different questions and activities)

1. Jacqueline's mother tells her children that they will experience a "moment when you walk into a room and/no one there is like you" (14). Have you experienced this? What might this feel like?
2. Why does Woodson structure her memoir into five distinct parts? How does this choice add to the story?
3. Where does Jacqueline start to see change happening in her life? Where does she start to see it in the world in which she lives?

4. What is Jacqueline's attitude toward God and religion? How does she seem conflicted?
5. Jacqueline loves writing because it allows her to create the worlds she imagines. What world did she create through her memoir? Is there an end to her story?

Additional Resources:

- Extensive [teaching guide](#) from Yale New Haven Teachers Institute
- Some of the project zero frames might work for open-ended questions that are not specific to the text
 - [Step in, step out, step back](#)
 - [Values, Identities, Actions](#)