

June 2016

Dear 7th Graders,

This summer you will read the book *Brown Girl Dreaming* by Jacqueline Woodson. This book is an award-winning memoir written in a series of poems about a young black girl growing up in both the North and the South during the 1960s and 1970s. Woodson uses vivid figurative language and description to bring her experiences and feelings to life. She is growing up during the Civil Rights Movement and there are many references to important historical events that will come up in your social studies classes. I think you will be able to relate to Woodson's feelings about school, siblings, parents, friends and growing up.

In addition to *Brown Girl Dreaming*, you are required to read at least two additional books from the list of recommended titles for 7th grade on the Dana Hall Summer Reading List. You received a booklet with these titles and you can also access this information on the Dana Hall Library website: <http://library.danahall.org/reading-lists/summer-reading/>.

Here is the assignment for *Brown Girl Dreaming*. These tasks will help ready you for our first two weeks of class together. Make sure that you write in complete sentences and that you either write neatly in a paper journal or type your work. If you type your work, please make sure that you bring a printed copy with you to English class on Wednesday, September 7, 2016.

Happy Reading!

Before you read:

- 1) Read the poem "Birches" by Robert Frost. Woodson refers to this title in her poem "birch tree poem" on page 223. You can find a copy of "Birches" at <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/173524>.
- 2) Before her story begins, Woodson includes a copy of the Langston Hughes poem, "Hold Fast to Dreams." Read the poem. Jot down some notes on why you think she may have begun her book with Hughes' writing. What message does the poem convey to you?
- 3) Look up the following events, people, etc. This will provide a context for your reading. After you look them up, jot down a few notes identifying what they are.

James Baldwin
Freedom Singers

**John F. Kennedy
Malcolm X
Rosa Parks
Ruby Bridges**

As you read:

1) As you read the poems, have a pen or pencil in hand and mark up the text. Underline words or phrases that stand out to you or surprise you. In the margins jot down observations you may want to bring up in class as well as any questions that come up.

After you read:

2) Answer the following questions in a short paragraph (3-5 sentences). We will look at these particular poems in class together.

-Throughout the book there is a series of poems titled, “how to listen.” What lessons do these poems teach you? Why do you think Woodson believes that listening is important for writers?

-How are “the fabric store”, “sterling high school, grenville” and “what everybody knows now” examples of how even after segregation is over, Jim Crow customs remain?

-In “hair night” and “ribbons,” Woodson describes childhood rituals. What might the hair ribbons symbolize for Woodson? What might be significant about hair night?

-The phrase “ready to change the world” appears in multiple poems. Why do you think this phrase is repeated? What is the effect of the repetition on you, the reader?

- In “writing #1” what type of figurative language does Woodson use to explain her feelings about writing to you?

-In “learning from langston,” Woodson writes a poem in response to a Langston Hughes’ poem. Choose any of the poems from this book and write a free verse poem in response.

Here is the activity for your free choice books:

1. Write a short paragraph (3-5 sentences) where you include the title, author and the most important event. Please write one paragraph for each book.

2. Write a short paragraph (3-5 sentences) where you choose one character and explain how this character changed and why. Please write one paragraph for each book.