A TEACHER’S GUIDE TO

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

ANOTHER BROOKLYN
A NOVEL

JACQUELINE WOODSON

NATIONAL BOOK AWARD-WWinning AUTHOR OF
BROWN GIRL DREAMING

NATIONAL BOOK AWARD
FINALIST

“How do you begin to tell your own story?”

Amstdad

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About the Book

With her first adult novel in twenty years, Jacqueline Woodson's Another Brooklyn tells the story of August, Sylvia, Gigi, and Angela—four friends growing up girl in Brooklyn. Throughout a novel that blends memory and moment, we follow August as a chance meeting floods her with memories of friendship, love, loss, triumph, and heartbreak.

A coming of age story about what it means to be a girl and what it means to be themselves in an ever-changing neighborhood, the lives of August, Sylvia, Gigi, and Angela will resonate with students in classrooms from grades 9-12 through college.

About the Author

National Book Award-winner Jacqueline Woodson is the author of the New York Times bestselling memoir Brown Girl Dreaming. Woodson was recently named the Young People’s Poet Laureate by the Poetry Foundation. She is the author of more than two dozen award-winning books for young adults, middle graders and children. Among her many accolades, she is a four-time Newbery Honor winner, a three-time National Book Award finalist, and a two-time Coretta Scott King Award winner.

Woodson is also the recipient of the Margaret A. Edwards Award for lifetime achievement for her contributions to young adult literature, the winner of the Jane Addams Children’s Book Award, and was the 2013 United States nominee for the Hans Christian Andersen Award. She lives with her family in Brooklyn, New York.

For more information, visit: http://www.jacquelinewoodson.com/
Guided Reading Questions

CHAPTER 1

- On page 1, Woodson introduces the themes of memory and moment. What do you think these terms mean in her context?
- What kinds of losses has August experienced?
- Why are jazz and blues, as musical styles, better matches for August's experience than Top 40 radio?
- In what ways does this opening chapter manipulate time?
- How does August start to talk about the weight of growing up a girl in this first chapter?

CHAPTER 2

- On pages 25-26, we learn of a moment in August's father's life that changed how he viewed religion. What about this moment would influence him and change his mind?
- How does learning about August's mother combine the themes of "moment" and "memory"?
- In spite of being warned against female friendships, why would August be drawn to Sylvia, Gigi, and Angela?
- Why is August so preoccupied with the idea of girlhood?
- What are the differences emerging between August and her brother? What accounts for these differences?

CHAPTER 3

- Does the feeling of possession seem a logical way to describe the way friendship emerged between August, Sylvia, Gigi, and Angela?
- On pages 36-37, Sylvia asks August what she's looking for. What do you think August is looking for?
- What do you think "Everything" on page 37 means to August?
- What kinds of things do these girls have in common? Why are these commonalities significant?

CHAPTER 4

- In what ways does memory cause problems for August's mother?
- How would you describe the socio-economic condition in which August lives?
- Is August's uncle Clyde the only ghost-like presence in the novel?
- Describe the differences between SweetGrove and Brooklyn. How does August respond to both of them?
- The idea of possession, explored in Chapter 3, becomes something different at the end of this chapter and deals with SweetGrove. What is the difference and why is it significant?
CHAPTER 5

- How do mothers inform each girl's life?
- What is the impact of Gigi's rape described elliptically? Is it more or less impactful than if the account of it had been done in more detail?
- Now that you know a bit more about their personalities, how would you describe each of these girls and how they function as a group?
- On page 61, the girls describe arming themselves against an ever-changing world and how Brooklyn seems to re-arm itself. What is it like to be a girl in this environment?
- Do we get the feeling that there is a sense of future for these girls? What kinds of futures do you think they'll have? What shapes that view?

CHAPTER 6

- Why do you think August is preoccupied with different kinds of poverty?
- Do you think others make August grow up too soon? Why or why not?
- How important are dreams and having dreams to August and others in the novel? Do you think some characters are better dreamers than others?
- What are the similarities and differences between August's mother and Jennie, August's neighbor?

CHAPTER 7

- How does the title reference come about in the novel? Why is it significant?
- In what ways does the novel raise the theme of "other places"?
- In talking about her group of friends on pages 70-71, August says, "The four of us together weren't something they understood. They understood girls alone, folding their arms across their breasts, praying for invisibility." Why does group dynamics become so important to these girls?
- How would you describe the interactions that these girls have with boys and men in their neighborhoods?

CHAPTER 8

- What sorts of tensions within the neighborhood does the blackout illuminate?
- In terms of demographics, how does the neighborhood change after the blackout?
- As Jennie's family is again ruptured, August, on pages 86-87, talks of dreaming her family whole again. How do August's dreams turn out? Does her family become whole again?
- What kinds of change does Sister Loretta represent?
- Why does August feel like such an outsider? Do you agree with her that she is an outsider?
CHAPTER 9

- What does religion mean to August? Do you think it's something important to her?
- On page 99, do you believe August when she says that friendships will fall apart?
- Does August admire Sylvia's life at this point in the novel, or is she jealous of it?
- Given the demeanor of Sylvia's family, what kinds of boundaries do they create between themselves and others?

CHAPTER 10

- With Gigi and Sylvia leaving, where does that leave August? How is she being effected by her diminished social circle?
- How would you describe the changes in August's building? What kind of living environment is it?
- Do you think August will ever overcome the struggles over her mother's death?

CHAPTER 11

- Throughout the novel, we are continually told that Angela has a silence about her. Why do you think she stays silent, rather than talk about the things that are bothering her?
- At this point in the novel, do you think the girls' efforts to stay together and remain close friends will work out?
- When Angela reaches puberty, her mother tells her to tell no one. Why do you think she says this?
- How does love manifest in the relationships among August, Sylvia, Angela, and Gigi?

CHAPTER 12

- Throughout their journey towards adolescence, the girls seem to be surrounded by other girls who serve as cautionary tales. Do you think they learn from what they see in their neighborhood?
- What does Down South represent?
- As their father becomes increasingly more religious, August and her brother gain freedom. Why does her brother seem to not take advantage of their father's inattention?
- Is August's silence a choice? Or is it how she experiences her grief?
- In this chapter, we learn how August's mother dies. What is your reaction to her death?

CHAPTER 13

- In what ways does this chapter explore the ways in which the girls become "lost"?
- On page 146 we learn of August's desire to move away. Are you surprised by this feeling of hers?
- Do you think August, Gigi, and Sylvia forget Angela?
- On page 150, what does the phrase "the before place" represent?
- We learn that Sylvia begins dating Jerome. Does this act represent Sylvia's betrayal of August?
CHAPTER 14

- How does August find a way out of Brooklyn?
- Why does Gigi commit suicide?
- On page 155, August says, "The earth is seventy percent water. Hard not to walk into that." Do you think this statement represents a kind of acceptance of her mother's death?
- Near the end of the chapter, we learn that Sylvia is pregnant with Jerome's baby. Ultimately, this pregnancy ruptures the relationship between Sylvia and August. Do you think it's understandable as to why they're no longer friends?

CHAPTER 15

- Are you surprised that August travels to college alone?
- While in college, August changes the name she wants to be called to Auggie. Why is this change significant? What does it represent?
- On page 160 August asks, "How do you begin to tell your own story?" How would you answer this question?

CHAPTER 16

- In spite of all evidence to the contrary, August admits to never losing hope that her mother would return. How do you describe that sense of belief?
- On page 167, August relates some of the customs of the Ibo people. She says, "They believed going home to the water was far better than living their lives enslaved." In what ways could this quote apply to August's mother? To what was she enslaved?
- Near the end of the novel, we learn that August sees Angela again when Angela acts in a film August sees on television. Are you surprised at the scale of Angela's success?
- The final sentence of the novel is, "At some point, all of this, everything and everyone, became a memory." What do you think memory means in this context?

Writing Prompts

- In Another Brooklyn, how is Brooklyn a place that is both familiar and foreign to its characters?
- What are the ways to, using Woodson's phrase, "grow up girl" in Another Brooklyn?
- In the novel, are friendships between and among girls sustainable?
- August says, in the opening of the novel, "I know now that what is tragic isn't the moment. It is the memory." Throughout the novel, in what ways is memory tragic for the characters?
- Throughout the novel, we get snippets of how various cultures think about death and the dead from August's work as an anthropologist. How could this knowledge help her reconcile the deaths of various characters in the novel?

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HarperCollinsPublishers
Another Brooklyn
Jacqueline Woodson

SHORTLISTED FOR THE NATIONAL BOOK AWARD FOR FICTION 2016

They used to be inseparable. They used to be young, brave and brilliant – amazingly beautiful and terrifyingly alone. August, Sylvia, Angela and Gigi shared everything: songs, secrets, fears and dreams. But 1970s Brooklyn was also a dangerous place, where grown men reached for innocent girls, where mothers disappeared and futures vanished at the turn of a street corner.

Another Brooklyn is a heartbreaking and exquisitely written novel about a fleeting friendship that united four young lives, from one of our most gifted novelists.

Questions for Discussion

1. In her narration throughout the novel, August repeats the phrase, ‘This is memory’. Can August’s memory be trusted? What does ‘memory’ mean to her?

2. How does Jacqueline Woodson portray female friendship? What difficulties do August, Sylvia, Gigi and Angela face?

3. As the novel progresses, we see August’s father and brother become increasingly religious. How can August’s reluctance but engagement with the family’s new religion be understood?

4. Death is a recurring theme in the novel. In what ways does August deal with death, if at all? Does she ever confront the subject?

5. What role does race play in the lives of the four friends? And in the wider neighbourhood?
6. The novel sheds light on the experience of growing up. How does August describe the treatment of children in her neighbourhood, including herself and her brother?

7. August and her brother are initially very close. At what point in the narrative do they seem to grow distant, if at all? Why do you think this might be?

8. The structure of the novel is retrospective, but features flashbacks throughout. What is the effect of the overlapping recent- and distant-pasts in the novel? How does August come to understand her own past?

9. How does Jacqueline Woodson create a sense of place in the novel? What makes her portrayal of the setting ‘another’ Brooklyn?

10. How can gender relations be understood from the perspective of the four friends?

Jacqueline Woodson is the bestselling author of more than two dozen award-winning books for young adults, middle graders, and children, including the New York Times bestselling memoir Brown Girl Dreaming, which won the 2014 National Book Award, the Coretta Scott King Award, a Newbery Honor Award, an NAACP Image Award, and the Sibert Honor Award. Woodson was recently named the Young People’s Poet Laureate by the Poetry Foundation. She lives with her family in Brooklyn, New York.
Exquisite! Such a beautifully written piece of work, that it felt like poetry, both in the flow and the content. It has an ethereal dreamy quality and is full of rich metaphors.

I have been struggling with my review of this book, because whatever I seem to write doesn't really do the book justice. It is such a unique beautiful piece of writing. The story begins with August, the narrator, returning by train to visit her dying father. She catches a glimpse of Sylvia, a childhood friend and memories come flooding back to her. The ethereal quality of the book has in part to do with the fact that the narrator is looking way back on an earlier part of her life; in part that she is remembering her childhood, one in which she could not comprehend or accept the death of her mother; and thirdly the poetic quality to the writing.

The idea that August thinks her mother will return and convinces her younger brother of the same, feels so honest, so real, so a part of how children really cope with the loss of a parent. Within the book, different cultural rites of death are mentioned reminding the reader that death is there, but not letting us know the actual circumstances of the mother's death until later.

Once August arrives in Brooklyn with her father and brother, the father cages the children in the house worried about the dangers of the outside world. This backfires as her younger brother falls through the glass window injuring his arm in his attempts to watch the outside world. At this point, August and her brother are allowed outside to experience the world.
August reminisces about her female friendships from this era in her life. She had developed a close-knit group of girlfriends who become her "home," her family, and this allows her to feel alive again, after feeling cooped up in their Brooklyn apartment. Together these girls feel stronger and braver. Their friendship gives them a sense of safety, of home, of togetherness that is lacking from their actual home environments. They grow into puberty together, date, experiment with sex. They confide in each other about things that they do not feel safe confiding to their own parents.

August’s mother’s words about not trusting female friendships keep echoing back to her. “Don’t trust women, my mother said to me. Even the ugly ones will take what you thought was yours.” August learns how this can be true as the friendships begin to slip and in some cases fracture. However, for a time, the friendships are a beautiful thing and allow the girls to feel powerful in a world where they are vulnerable, on account of being female, minorities and poor.

This reflection is of Brooklyn in the 1970’s in a neighborhood that is turning from white to black. While August finds comfort in her friendships, her father finds comfort in religion. It is a stunning look at this place and time period, the struggles these girls faced as they came of age and the hope and courage needed to face it. I highly recommend this to everyone. ★★★★★

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you think August did not realize her mother was dead or did she just not accept it?
2. Discuss the role of friendship in the novel.
3. Discuss the role of religion in this novel.
4. Discuss race relations in Brooklyn in the 1970s as described in this novel.
5. Compare their Brooklyn to life as described in Biafra.
6. Why do you think that August does not find comfort and hope with her father?
7. Why does Jennie disappear each time her children return?
8. Why can't Gigi tell her parents about the soldier? Why does she think they won’t believe her?
9. Did her mother’s prophecy about friendships become true?
10. Discuss the ugliness of the surroundings contrasted by the beauty of the friendships.

Jacqueline Woodson's website

Review by Ron Charles in the Washington Post

Review by Tayari Jones in the New York Times

Another Brooklyn
Jacqueline Woodson, 2016
HarperCollins
192 pp.

Summary
Nominated, 2016 National Book Awards

The acclaimed National Book Award-winning author of Brown Girl Dreaming delivers her first adult novel in twenty years.

Running into a long-ago friend sets memory from the 1970s in motion for August, transporting her to a time and a place where friendship was everything—until it wasn’t.

For August and her girls, sharing confidences as they ambled through neighborhood streets, Brooklyn was a place where they believed that they were beautiful, talented, brilliant—a part of a future that belonged to them.

But beneath the hopeful veneer, there was another Brooklyn, a dangerous place where grown men reached for innocent girls in dark hallways, where ghosts haunted the night, where mothers disappeared. A world where madness was just a sunset away and fathers found hope in religion.

Like Louise Meriwether’s Daddy Was a Number Runner and Dorothy Allison’s Bastard Out of Carolina, Jacqueline Woodson’s Another Brooklyn heartbreakingly illuminates the formative time when childhood gives way to adulthood—the promise and peril of growing up—and exquisitely renders a powerful, indelible, and fleeting friendship that united four young lives. (From the publisher.)

Author Bio
• Birth—February 12, 1963
• Where—Columbus, Ohio, USA
• Raised—Geenville, South Carolina, and Brooklyn, New York
• Education—B.A., Adelphi University
• Awards—(see below)
• Currently—lives in New York City, New York

Jacqueline Woodson is an American writer of books for children and teens. She is best known for her 2014 Brown Girl Dreaming, which won the National Book Award and a Newbery Honor. Her latest novel, Another Brooklyn, was published in 2016 to wide praise.
Woodson’s youth was split between South Carolina and Brooklyn. In a 2002 interview with Publishers Weekly she recalled:

*The South was so lush and so slow-moving and so much about community. The city was thriving and fast-moving and electric. Brooklyn was so much more diverse: on the block where I grew up, there were German people, people from the Dominican Republic, people from Puerto Rico, African-Americans from the South, Caribbean-Americans, Asians.*

After college at Adelphi University, Woodson went to work for Kirchoff/Wohlberg, a literary agent for children’s authors. She caught the attention of a book agent, and although the partnership did not work out, it got her first manuscript out of a drawer.

She later enrolled in Bunny Gable’s children’s book writing class at the New School in New York, where an editor at Delacorte, heard a reading from *Last Summer with Maizon* and requested the manuscript. Delacorte bought the manuscript and published Woodson’s first six books.

**Writing**

As an author, Woodson is known for the detailed physical landscapes she writes into each of her books. She places boundaries everywhere—social, economic, physical, sexual, racial—then has her characters break through both the physical and psychological boundaries to create a strong and emotional story.

She is also known for her optimism. She has said that she dislikes books that do not offer hope. She has offered William H. Armstrong's 1969 novel *Sounder* as an example of “bleak” and “hopeless”; on the other hand, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* offers “moments of hope and sheer beauty” despite the family’s poverty. She uses this philosophy in her own writing, saying, “If you love the people you create, you can see the hope there.”

Woodson has tackled topics such as interracial coupling, teenage pregnancy, and homosexuality—subjects not commonly or openly discussed when her books were published. Overall, she explores issues of class, race, family ties, and history in ground-breaking ways, and she does so by placing sympathetic characters into realistic situations. Many of her characters, who might be considered “invisible” in the eyes of society, engage in a search for self-identity rather than equality or social justice.

Some of the content in Woodson’s books, however, has raised flags—homosexuality, child abuse, harsh language, and teen pregnancy have led to threats of censorship. In an NPR interview Woodson said that her books contain few curse words and that the difficulty adults have with her subject matter has more to do with their own discomfort than what young people should be thinking about. She suggests parents and teachers assess the many cultural influences over teens and then make a comparison with how her books treat those same issues.

**Honors**


In 2014 *Brown Girl Dreaming* won the national Book Award for Young People's Literature. That same year she was the U.S. nominee to the international Hans Christian Andersen Awards and became one of the Award's six finalists. In 2015 the Poetry Foundation named Woodson the Young People's Poet Laureate.

**Racial Joke**
When Woodson received her National Book Award in November, 2014, author Daniel Handler, the evening's emcee, made a joke about watermelons. In a *New York Times* Op-Ed piece, "The Pain of the Watermelon Joke," Woodson explained that "in making light of that deep and troubled history," Handler had come from a place of ignorance. She underscored the need for her mission to "give people a sense of this country's brilliant and brutal history, so no one ever thinks they can walk onto a stage one evening and laugh at another's too often painful past."

Handler, a friend of Woodson, issued multiple apologies and donated $10,000 to We Need Diverse Books, promising to match donations up to $100,000. "It was a disaster of my own making, he said. "[M]any, many people were very upset by it, and rightfully so."

**Personal**
Woodson is a lesbian with a partner and two children, a daughter named Toshi Georgianna and a son named Jackson-Leroy. (*Adapted from Wikipedia. Retrieved 8/17/2016.*)

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**Book Reviews**

With *Another Brooklyn*, Jacqueline Woodson has delivered a love letter to loss, girlhood, and home. It is a lyrical, haunting exploration of family, memory, and other ties that bind us to one another and the world.

*Boston Globe*

In Jacqueline Woodson's soaring choral poem of a novel...four young friends... navigate the perils of adolescence, mean streets, and haunted memory in 1970s Brooklyn, all while dreaming of escape.

*Vanity Fair*

[E]ntwined coming-of-age narratives—lost mothers, wounded war vets, nodding junkies, menacing streetscapes—are starkly realistic, yet brim with moments of pure poetry.

*Elle*

An engrossing novel about friendship, race, the magic of place and the relentlessness of change.

*People Magazine*

*(Stared review.)* With dreams as varied as their conflicts, the young women confront dangers lurking on the streets [and] discover first love.... Woodson draws on all the senses to trace the milestones in a woman’s life and how her early experiences...
shape her identity.

*Publishers Weekly*

*(Stared review.*) Woodson seamlessly transitions her characters from childhood to adulthood as August looks back on the events that led her to become silent in her teen years, eventually fleeing Brooklyn and the memories of her former friends. *Verdict:* An evocative portrayal of friendship, love, and loss that will resonate with anyone creating their own identity. —*Stephanie Sendaula*

*Library Journal*

*(Stared review.*) The novel’s richness defies its slim page count. In her poet’s prose, Woodson not only shows us backward-glancing August attempting to stave off growing up and the pains that betray youth, she also wonders how we dream of a life parallel to the one we’re living

*Booklist*

*(Stared review.*) Here is an exploration of family—both the ones we are born into and the ones we make for ourselves—and all the many ways we try to care for these people we love so much, sometimes succeeding, sometimes failing. A stunning achievement from one of the quietly great masters of our time.

*Kirkus Reviews*

Discussion Questions

1. Consider the epigraph from Richard Wright that begins the novel. In what ways are the images and ideas relevant to the story that follows?

2. How are each of the girls—Sylvia, Angela, Gigi, and the narrator August—similar or different?

3. What does it mean that the girls “came together like a jazz improv”? In what ways is jazz music about relationships?

4. When she is 15, August “was barely speaking” anymore. What were the reasons for this? Why might ceasing to speak be a response to difficulty?

5. What did the four girlfriends provide each other at different stages of their lives and struggles?

6. What is added to our understanding of August’s experience and life in the city by the fact that she went on to study anthropology? What does such a discipline help her understand about her life?

7. While August had her girlfriends, her brother had his faith. How are these two support systems similar or different?

8. What are the many and varied effects on August of her mother’s death?

9. For much of her childhood and adolescence, August believes that her mother will return. Why is this? What does it take and mean to accept such tragedy? Can denial
ever be valuable?

10. What's the effect of Woodson weaving into the novel details of how other cultures throughout history have responded to the death of loved ones? Which of these rituals seems most powerful or effective?

11. In what ways is August's father helpful or not as she struggles with her mother's death?

12. Throughout the novel, Woodson writes, "This is memory." What does this mean in the context of the story? What is the nature of memory? In what ways is memory valuable or burdensome?

13. August's mother had taught her that girls and women do not make good friends. What did she mean by this? How does August's experience with her girlfriends support or contradict this idea?

14. After moving to the neighborhood, August and her brother could not go outside but watched other children through the window. Why did their father believe the world wasn't a safe place? In what ways might the image of watching through the window be symbolic?

15. What does it mean for the girls to have shared "the weight of growing up Girl in Brooklyn?" What were the particular threats or challenges for them growing up in the neighborhood? How did each affect them? How did they respond?

16. August and her brother notice the profound way that many people in the neighborhood try "to dream themselves out...as though there was another Brooklyn." What does this mean? In what ways is dreaming helpful or harmful during difficult or oppressive times?

17. August's brother comes to love learning math. Why does it appeal to him? What role does education play for each of them as they grow into adulthood? Why didn't each of the other girls pursue further education?

18. To what extent is Sister Loretta a valuable person for August? What changed for better or worse with "the woman who was not Sister Mama Loretta"?

19. What complex forces drew the four girls apart as they grew older?

20. Eventually August accepts that Brooklyn, not Tennessee where they had all lived with her mother, was home. Why? What qualities determine a place as home? How might a feeling of home exist separate from any particular place? (Questions issued by the publisher.)

[Summary]