Peace, Locomotion

by

Jacqueline Woodson

Teacher’s Edition

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# Peace, Locomotion
by Jacqueline Woodson

JLG Guide written by Linda Barr

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About the Author

As a child, Jacqueline Woodson wrote on everything and everywhere. (Nowadays, that's called graffiti!) She even wrote stories on sidewalks and in the margins of her notebooks. She says she still loves to watch "words flower into sentences and sentences blossom into stories."

In fact, some of Ms. Woodson’s early “stories” were really lies that she told just to see if she could get away with it. So it’s not surprising that once she wrote a poem about Martin Luther King, Jr. that was so good, no one believed that she wrote it. After people finally concluded that she really had written the poem, she won a prize with it.

Ms. Woodson still feels that writing isn’t easy. Today, after sitting for long hours without making any headway on a story, she thinks about her fifth-grade teacher—the teacher whose eyes lit up when she told Jacqueline, “This is really good.” You might recognize this teacher as you read Peace, Locomotion.

Ms. Woodson was born in Columbus, Ohio, and grew up in Greenville, South Carolina, and Brooklyn, New York, the setting of Peace, Locomotion. She earned a college degree in English. Then she became a drama therapist for homeless children and runaways in New York City. After Ms. Woodson started writing full time, her books won the Coretta Scott King Honor award, the Caldecott Honor award, the Newbery Honor Medal, the National Book Honor award, and many other awards given to children's book writers. Several of her books have been named ALA Notable Children's Books, ALA Best Books for Young Adults, and School Library Journal Best Books. Look on page 31 for a complete list of Ms. Woodson's books.

Peacce, Locomotion is Woodson's sequel to Locomotion. In the first book, the main character, Lonnie Collins Motion—or Locomotion—is living with his new foster mother after his parents died in a fire. Lonnie must cope with many changes, including visiting his sister Lili in her new foster home. Lonnie’s teacher, Ms. Marcus, encourages him to express himself in writing. Locomotion is a series of poems that Lonnie writes to remember his past, record his feelings, and try to deal with his future.

Jacqueline Woodson, who still lives in Brooklyn, has a daughter and a son. Fortunately for readers, she is still telling stories. In fact, she says she’ll stop writing when she stops breathing!
Prereading Activities

Book Summary
Lonnie Collins Motion—Locomotion—is now twelve and feeling comfortable living with his foster mom, Miss Edna. Nearly every day, he writes a letter to his sister Lili, who lives nearby with a different foster mother. Lonnie is glad that he and Lili have loving families again. However, his letters tell how much he misses his parents and how he looks forward to the day when he and Lili can live together again. Through his letters, Lonnie explores a number of ideas, including the concept of peace. One of Miss Edna’s sons is serving in the Army overseas, so peace has a new meaning for Lonnie.

Understanding Genre: Realistic Fiction
1. How can you tell whether a story is fiction? What makes it realistic fiction?

   A story is fiction if it is not true. It’s realistic fiction if it could happen.

2. Based on the summary above, what makes Peace, Locomotion realistic fiction?

   Kids do live in foster homes and miss their first families. The other events in the summary could happen, too.

3. What are some elements from other fiction genres that you would not expect to find in realistic fiction?

   Possible responses: fairies, elves, super-human powers, magic, and other characters or events that could not happen

4. Why do you think many readers enjoy realistic fiction?

   Possible responses: They like to see how “real” people solve problems; they can identify with characters who seem real.
Prereading Activities

Making Predictions
Read this summary of Lonnie’s first six letters to his sister Lili. Then make predictions based on evidence from the text and/or from your prior knowledge or personal experience.

In these letters, Lonnie counts the years until he and Lili will be old enough to live together on their own. He reminds her about special times they had with their parents. Lonnie tells Lili that his teacher is leaving, maybe to have a baby. This teacher once told Lonnie that he had to be published before he could call himself a poet. In another letter, Lonnie recalls how his friend Lamont said he was moving to Florida, where he would have a swimming pool in his backyard. Another boy accused Lamont of lying about the pool.

1. How do you predict Lonnie will react to his teacher leaving?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I predict: Possible prediction: Lonnie won’t miss this teacher and is looking forward to getting a new one.</th>
<th>Based on what evidence? His teacher probably hurt his feelings when she told him he had to be published to be a poet.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. How do you predict Lonnie will react when Lamont says he’s getting a pool?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I predict: Possible prediction: Lonnie will think Lamont is lying about the pool, too.</th>
<th>Based on what evidence? Friends often exaggerate to impress each other.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

3. Set a purpose for reading based on your predictions above.

Possible purpose: I want to get to know Lonnie and, through his letters, Lili and the other characters in the book. I want to find out about Lonnie’s teacher.
Letter by Letter
Lonnie’s First Poem and His First Six Letters
pages 3–16

Before You Read
Introducing Vocabulary
Define each of these words, paying attention to the part of speech indicated. (One word has another meaning when it’s used as a different part of speech.) Use a dictionary, if necessary. Then complete each sentence with the correct word.

aspiring (adj.) ________________________________
camouflage (adj.) something that hides or blends in order to imitate the surroundings
down (adj.) small, soft feathers; filled with small, soft feathers ____________________________
skeptical (adj.) ________________________________

1. Ms. Cooper was _______ about Lonnie’s skill as a poet. ____________
2. Lonnie wasn’t published yet, but he was a/an _________ poet. ____________
3. A _________ pillow is soft and warm. ____________
4. Soldiers wear _________ to hide from their enemies. ____________

camouflage

down

After You Read
Analyzing the Writing: Point of View

1. This whole story consists of Lonnie’s letters to Lili. How do you know the story is told from first-person point of view?

Lonnie is the only one we hear from in the story because these are his letters. He uses first-person pronouns, such as I, me, and my. We know only what Lonnie sees, hears, and thinks.

2. How might this story have been different if Lili had written some of the letters?

The story would have had two first-person points of view. We might have _______
discovered that Lili has different concerns and plans than Lonnie.
3. Lonnie writes about what his friends say and do. Does that mean the story is told from the friends’ points of view, too? Explain your answer.

No, Lonnie is reporting only what he hears and sees his friends say and do—and what he guesses they think. The story is still from Lonnie’s point of view. He could be wrong about what his friends are thinking.

**Getting to Know the Characters**
The author helps us get to know the characters by showing what they do, what they say, and how others react to them. Read this chart and explain what each action tells us about that character.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>What I learned about the character from this action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lonnie</td>
<td>writing to his sister nearly every day</td>
<td>Lonnie really feels the loss of his first family and hasn’t given up hope that he and his sister will live together again some time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamont</td>
<td>“Lamont put the picture back in his pocket and told us it wasn’t like he asked his daddy to get the job. He said if it was up to him, he’d never leave Brooklyn.” (page 16)</td>
<td>Friends are important to Lamont. He is sad about leaving them and maybe angry with his father for getting a job so far away.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Responding to the Story**
1. Why do you think the author starts the book with the poem “Imagine Peace”?

The title of the book is *Peace, Locomotion*. Lonnie’s poem shares some of his thoughts about peace. It also shows that he is a good poet.

2. In the letter on pages 5–6, Lonnie writes that his dad said, “Ain’t it boring to always be winning?” Lonnie thinks about what would happen if you always knew you were going to win: how would you feel when you *did* win? What do you think the author is trying to tell us?

Answers may vary but should reflect something about how our successes are sweeter when we know we might fail.
3. Reread the letter on pages 7–8. Did Lonnie have to let his sister go live with a foster mother who didn't want boys? Explain your answer.

   The author hints that they could have stayed together in a group home. Maybe they already had lived in one, because Lonnie writes about people being mean there.

   Lonnie wanted a real home for Lili, so he let her go to a foster mom who was not willing to take him, too.

4. Reread the letter on pages 10–12. How did Ms. Cooper's comments affect Lonnie's feelings about himself?

   He lost confidence in himself as a poet. He was a little angry because she made him feel stupid. Then his schoolwork suffered, too.

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**Literature Connection**

**Langston Hughes** (1902–1967) was a great American poet who wrote during a time known as the Harlem Renaissance. One of his most famous poems is called “Dreams.” Look up the poem in your library or online. Memorize the poem and recite it for your class. Then have a discussion that includes the following questions:

- Why are dreams so important? What kind of dreams do you think Mr. Hughes meant: the kind you have when you sleep or something else?
- What does it mean to “hold fast” to something?
- Why is the metaphor of a “broken-winged bird” so appropriate for this poem?
- What is the other metaphor in the poem? Which one do you like better?
Letter by Letter
The Next Two Letters
pages 17–27

Before You Read
Introducing Vocabulary
Lonnie is confused about the meaning of the word tour. He thought that tour meant going on a vacation, not going to fight in a war. Actually, tour comes from a Latin word that means “to turn.” One meaning of tour is “taking a turn or doing your duty.” So a tour can be a trip just for fun—or a tour can be a time of doing your duty.

What if you read that a nation depends on “tourism” for its economy? Which meaning of the word tour is used in tourism? Explain your answer.

Tourism uses the meaning “a trip just for fun”; that nation has attractions that draw tourists, who spend their money there and provide jobs for people in that nation.

Making Predictions
1. In one letter, Miss Edna explains to Lonnie why her son Jenkins joined the Army Reserve. Why do you think he joined?

Possible predictions: to fight for our nation; to travel; for education

2. In the second letter in this section, Lonnie is going to celebrate his birthday. How do you think he wants to celebrate it?

Possible prediction: with Lili

Social Studies Connection
The United States Army Reserve
Lonnie’s foster brother, Jenkins, is in the Army Reserve. The Army Reserve provides trained and ready soldiers and units to support the regular Army wherever and whenever it needs help. Find out how the Reserve is different from the National Guard.

If you know someone in the Reserve, the regular Army, the National Guard, or another branch of the military, see if you can find out more about what he or she does. Share what you learn with your classmates.

The Reserve is a support group, ready to send its soldiers to help the Army respond to a crisis overseas. The National Guard can be called up to help with an emergency in the United States, such as damage after a hurricane. Both forces work and train on the weekends.

After You Read

Checking Predictions
Review your prediction about why Jenkins joined the Army Reserve. Why did you make your prediction? Were you correct?

Answers will vary. Possible response: my brother/sister/neighbor joined the Army Reserve for that reason.

Now review your prediction about how Lonnie wanted to celebrate his birthday. Why did you make that prediction? Were you correct?

Possible response: I can tell from Lonnie's letters that he really wants to be with his sister.

Analyzing the Writing
1. The second paragraph on page 17 starts with a sentence that is 44 words long. Yet Lonnie's next sentence is only seven words long. Why does the author use this kind of writing style?

Mixing really long sentences with short ones makes it seem as if a boy Lonnie's age really did write these letters. A mix of sentence lengths sounds like conversation.

2. Read this passage from page 22:

. . . She made a chocolate cake too. On top of it she wrote Happy Birthday, Lonnie—Tomorrow. And me and her and Rodney laughed about that. Then Rodney put his arm around my shoulder. “Well, Little Brother, you almost a man now,” he said.

What kinds of grammar errors can you see in this passage?

problems with pronouns; missing verb in the quotation; perhaps missing punctuation

3. Do these grammar errors hurt or help this book?

They help by making Lonnie's letters seem real; they make it seem as if real people are talking.
**Getting to Know the Characters: Miss Edna**

1. In the letter on pages 17–23, how can you tell that Miss Edna loves Lonnie? Support your answer with specific details.

   She patches his pants, listens to him, and knows when he’s feeling sad about his parents. Miss Edna also says it’s ok for him—and others—to cry.

2. On page 19, Miss Edna says, “Everybody’s got a right to their own tears.” What does she mean? What does this tell you about her?

   She means that everyone has a right to feel sad sometimes. That shows she is kind and understanding.

3. Would you like to have Miss Edna as a neighbor or family member? Explain your answer.

   Possible response: Yes, because I know she would listen and be understanding when I have a problem.

**Analyzing the Writing**

1. On page 26, after writing that Lili did not come for the visit, Lonnie adds:

   I looked up at Miss Edna and saw this look go across her face. I’d seen that same look on Mama—the time that boy in the park pushed you down and you cut your hand.

   How is this description better than writing, “Miss Edna looked angry”?

   Readers can picture Miss Edna’s face and better understand what kind of angry she was. It also shows that Lonnie is seeing Miss Edna more as a mother.

2. On page 27, Lonnie says he sounded like a really little kid who just dropped his ice cream cone. How does this comparison help you understand how Lonnie felt after not seeing Lili?

   The little kid would feel really sad about his loss, and so did Lonnie. It showed he could explain it so Lili would understand it, too.
Letter by Letter
The Next Six Letters
pages 28–45

Before You Read
Making Predictions
In some of these letters, Lonnie writes about his new teacher. Do you think she will be more like Ms. Marcus, who encouraged him to write poems, or more like Ms. Cooper, who told him he had to be published to be a poet?

I predict:
Possible prediction: Most students will want Lonnie’s new teacher to be more like Ms. Marcus and may predict this as their choice.

Based on what evidence?
This story is for kids, and it would be too depressing if another teacher discouraged Lonnie from writing. More teachers are likely to be like Ms. Marcus than like Ms. Cooper, hopefully.

Introducing Vocabulary: Context Clues
When you come across an unfamiliar word, sometimes the sentence or paragraph it is in gives you clues about its meaning. For example, as you read this passage from pages 33–34, look for clues to the meaning of amnesia.

I told Clyde for the hundred millionth time that Miss Edna wasn’t my real mama. . . . I told him again that the reason I called her Miss Edna was because she was only a foster mama. Sometimes it was like he had amnesia or something.

I think amnesia means losing your memory or forgetting things because Lonnie thinks Clyde can’t remember that Miss Edna is his foster mom.

Health Connection
“Catching Your Death”
Miss Edna knows lot of things. However, on page 30 when she tells Lonnie and Clyde that they will catch their death of cold from the rain, she is mistaken. Use your health textbook and other resources to find out what really causes colds. Then work with a partner to use what you learn to make a poster that will help students at your school avoid catching colds. Viruses, not rain, cause colds. Students’ posters should encourage classmates to avoid spreading germs by washing their hands often, coughing into their elbows (not their hands), using and discarding tissues, and so on.
After You Read
Checking Predictions
Reread your prediction. Was it confirmed? What new information would cause you to change your prediction about Lonnie’s new teacher?

Possible response: I was right! I would change my prediction if Ms. Alina started being critical of Lonnie or his writing. Other responses will vary.

Getting to Know the Characters: Lonnie and Clyde
1. On pages 33–36, Lonnie describes a conversation with Clyde. What does the conversation tell you about Clyde?

   Clyde has had a hard childhood, too, but he has learned to appreciate what he has.

   He is kind, though, and tries to help Lonnie understand that Miss Edna is his mama now.

2. Use this Venn diagram to compare and contrast what you know so far about Lonnie and Clyde. In Lonnie’s circle, write words and phrases that he would use to describe himself. In Clyde’s circle, describe him. In the overlapping part, tell how both of these two boys are similar.
3. On page 36, Lonnie writes about Clyde: “When he said the word kind, it sounded real down south—taking a long time to disappear the way those down-south words be doing.” What does this tell you about Clyde? How does this sentence show the author’s skill in writing?

   Clyde has an accent. The author writes from Lonnie’s point of view, describing Clyde’s accent as it sounded to Lonnie. The way she describes Clyde’s accent helps readers hear how he talks. It also shows that Lonnie thinks carefully about things.

**Analyzing the Writing**

**Using Personification**

Many authors use personification—giving human abilities to an inanimate object. For each example below, tell how the author used personification and how it helps you understand something in the story.

1. On page 29, Lonnie tells how Clyde tries to teach him to dribble the ball. Then he adds, “but the ball doesn’t like me like it likes Clyde . . .”

   A ball can’t like someone, but the author writes that it does to show that Clyde is comfortable with a soccer ball, but Lonnie feels awkward with it.

2. On the same page, Lonnie writes, “It doesn’t even make a little bit of sense to me that you could put a bulb in the ground in fall and it just sits there all winter long and then, boom, knows to come up when the spring comes.”

   A flower bulb doesn’t “know” when spring comes. The author puts it that way because that’s how Lonnie would describe what happens. There are some things Lonnie hasn’t learned yet.

**Making Connections**

1. Lonnie’s new teacher wants the class to think about one true thing every day. On page 45, Lonnie decides on one true thing: “Grown-ups come in all kinds of ways.” What do you think he means? Is this a true thing in your life, too? Why or why not?

   Lonnie means that not all grown-ups are alike. Students should explain whether they think that is true and give reasons for their response. They might mention some of the ways that adults differ from each other.

2. What is one true thing in your life—something you are very sure about?
Answers will vary. Possible response: My parents/grandparents/other family members/dog loves me.

3. What problems does Lonnie face that many people your age face?
   Possible responses: not living with their parents, worrying about family members, getting along with friends, dealing with different kinds of teachers
Letter by Letter
Seven More Letters and a Poem
pages 46–66

Before You Read
Making Predictions
In these letters, Lonnie is surprised at how fast Lili is growing up. He also learns that she has started calling her foster mom “Mama.” How do you think this will affect Lonnie?

I predict:
Possible prediction: He will be upset that Lili is starting to forget her first mother.

Based on what evidence?
Lonnie doesn’t call Miss Edna “Mama” because she isn’t his “real” mom. He probably won’t be happy with Lili.

After You Read
Checking Predictions
Based on what you read, was your prediction accurate?

Possible response: Yes, but then Lonnie seems to realize that Miss Edna and Lili’s foster mom are very important in their lives now, too.

Mastering Vocabulary
Words with Multiple Meanings
On page 48, Lonnie writes about the draft. Draft can mean “an uncomfortable breeze.” Draft can also mean “to draw off a group for special duty.” In the past, men were drafted into the Army because there weren’t enough soldiers. Right now, the United States has no draft. We depend on men and women to volunteer for our armed services.

1. On page 48, Lonnie writes that he and his friends thought Clyde was kind of slow at first. What are two meanings of the word slow? Which meaning is Lonnie using here?

   Slow can mean “not fast” or “not smart.” Lonnie meant “not smart.”

2. On page 49, Lonnie writes that Clyde kept his voice real low. What are two meanings of the word low? Which meaning is Lonnie using?

   Low can mean “close to the ground” or “soft volume.” Lonnie meant “soft volume.”
Getting to Know the Characters
1. Lonnie’s letter on pages 52–54 tells about an afternoon he spent with his foster brother, Rodney. What does this letter tell you about Rodney?

   Rodney is smart even if he didn’t do well in school. He realizes how much effect teachers can have on kids’ self-confidence. He is kind and wants to help others.

2. What does the poem on pages 59–60 tell you about Lonnie?

   He has a crush on LaTenya, but he is also thinking about people who live very different lives from his.

3. On page 64, Lili tells Lonnie, “That’s why I want you to be the rememberer. I want the Mama I used to have and the Mama I got now. I don’t want to not have one or not have the other.” What does this tell you about Lili? How is she different from Lonnie right now?

   Lili is ready to move on with her life, but Lonnie is still clinging to life before his parents died.

Analyzing the Writing
1. Lonnie makes many statements in his letters. Some of these statements are facts that can be proved, while others are his opinions—or the opinions of other characters in the story. Read each statement below and write whether it is a fact or an opinion.

   From page 48: “A best friend is a cool thing to have.”  
   ________________________________ opinion

   From page 49: Clyde says there’s not one person in the war who doesn’t have a nice heart.  
   ________________________________ opinion

   From page 53: “. . . we breathe in oxygen and breathe out carbon dioxide.”  
   ________________________________ fact

   From page 54: Ms. Marcus said Lonnie was a good poet.  
   ________________________________ both

(Explain which part of this sentence is a fact and which part is an opinion: Ms. Marcus did say that, so that part is a fact; whether Lonnie is a good poet or not is an opinion.

2. How does first-person point of view limit this story?

   Because we see everything from Lonnie’s point of view, we can’t tell what the other characters are really thinking, planning, or hoping.
Responding to the Story
1. In the letter on pages 47–50, Lonnie’s friend Eric tells everyone he’s going to join the Army. How does Clyde’s response change the mood of the story?

Clyde forces his friends to be more realistic about war. The mood becomes sad and thoughtful.

2. How much does this story depend on its setting—both the time period and the location?

The story does not depend on its setting very much. This setting is Brooklyn, but the story could take place in any town or city. The time period isn’t clear, but the story could be set at any time when our nation is at war.

Making Connections
1. In his letter on page 46, Lonnie says that writing makes him feel better inside. How might writing help someone? Does writing ever help you deal with your feelings?

Possible response: Writing can help you see situations more clearly, including your own feelings. It can help you express hurt feelings and get past them.

2. On page 51, Lonnie writes that it’s hard not to believe what people say about you. Do you think that’s true? What can you tell yourself if others say mean things?

Possible response: It is hard to ignore mean comments, but if you have confidence in yourself, you can focus on what’s good about you and your life. Besides, it is only their opinion, not a fact.

Science Connection
Photosynthesis
Using your science textbook or another resource and another sheet of paper, draw a diagram that shows the process of photosynthesis. Use arrows and labels to help explain the process. Show your diagram to someone younger and see if you can explain the process as clearly as Rodney did to Lonnie on page 53. Share the results of your teaching experience with your class.
Letter by Letter
A Dozen More Letters
pages 67–93

Before You Read
Making Predictions
In these letters, Lonnie's family learns that Jenkins has been badly injured in the war. How do you think Jenkins's injury will affect Lonnie's life?

I predict:
Possible prediction: The whole family will be very worried about Jenkins. Miss Edna and Rodney will not have much time for Lonnie.

Based on what evidence?
Miss Edna is Jenkins's mother, and he will probably need lots of help, so she might not have time for her healthy foster son.

After You Read
Checking Predictions
Based on what you read, was your prediction accurate?

Possible response: Yes, because Lonnie has to take more responsibility now, such as making sure they have milk. Yet Miss Edna still cares a lot about Lonnie and doesn't give his room to Jenkins.

Analyzing the Writing
The letter on page 81 contains only two short sentences. Why didn’t the author make it longer and more detailed?

The letter is short to focus on the bad news in it. Its length also suggests that Lonnie could not write more that day. Maybe he was too sad.
**Responding to the Story**

1. Reread the letter on pages 82–85. Who do you think has a harder life, Lonnie or Clyde? Explain your answer.

   **Possible response:** Clyde has a harder life because he always has to be ready for change. He can't be sure where he will live next or with whom. Lonnie knows Miss Edna will give him a home and take care of him, no matter what.

2. In his letter on pages 86–87, Lonnie writes:

   She [Miss Edna] said, *And you'll always have everything you need.* I didn't mind about not having everything I wanted, because I know sometimes I want stuff that I don't really need. But when Miss Edna said that, it made me believe that I'd always have food and warm clothes and her and you.

   Is Lonnie on his way to finding peace? Explain your answer.

   **Yes, because when you are happy with what you have, you will feel peace.**

3. In the same letter, Lonnie tells about seeing a man in a wheelchair. Why do he and Miss Edna react the way they do?

   **They know that Jenkins will be in a wheelchair, too, and they are very sad about that.**

**Making Connections**

1. In the letter on page 72, Lonnie talks about his memories getting gray. He isn't sure any more if what he remembers really happened. What happens to your own memories after a while? Do you remember some things and not others? Why is that?

   **Responses will vary, but students should be able to offer an answer to the questions.**

2. On page 79, Lonnie tells Lili that there's peace in her music. Where do you find peace? How does that feel?

   **Students might find peace in church, in a quiet time alone, and so on. Like Lonnie, peace might feel like pulling warm covers over you.**
Letter by Letter
A Poem and Ten More Letters
pages 94–114

Before You Read
Making Predictions
Lonnie wrote some of these letters in December, the month when his parents died. How do you think he will react to this anniversary of his parents’ death?

I predict:
Possible prediction:
Lonnie will do something special to remember his parents.

Based on what evidence?
Lonnie writes about his parents all the time, so I think he will write a poem to remember them.

After You Read
Checking Predictions
Based on what you read, was your prediction about Lonnie accurate?

Possible response: No, because he withdrew from everyone at home and at school. He didn’t even want to talk about how he felt.

Responding to the Story
1. On pages 110–112, Lonnie overhears Jenkins tell his mom, “This wasn’t the dream I had, Mama.” Then Miss Edna says, “This wasn’t the dream none of us had, but it’s our lives now and we need to be living it, sweetie. We need to be living it.” What does Miss Edna mean?

She means that they need to deal with their lives the way they are and make the best of them.

2. Jenkins has been spending all of his time alone in his room, staring out the window. How can facing the loss of his leg help him find peace?

Feeling sorry for himself isn’t helping. If he admits his leg is gone and starts to deal with it, he will feel better about himself and his future.
3. Reread the letter on pages 113–114 and think about Lonnie’s other letters so far. What are two ways that Lonnie and Jenkins are the same? What is one way they are different?

Same: They both have had serious losses, and they both need to deal with them.
Different: Lonnie is trying to remember his parents, and Jenkins is trying to forget the war.

Analyzing the Writing
1. On page 105, Lonnie writes that Jenkins has “a special sick person’s bathroom thing.” Why didn’t Lonnie call it a portable toilet?

The author is writing in first-person, through Lonnie’s eyes. He would not call it a portable toilet. He describes it the best he can.

2. If Jenkins had written the letter on pages 107–108, how would the letter have been different? What might we learn?

It would be from Jenkins’s point of view. We might learn why he finally came out of his room, what he thought about “the boy,” and why he retreated again.

Making Connections
1. Reread Lonnie’s poem on pages 96–97. Do you think that young people often overlook the perfect little things in their lives? Do adults do this, too? Why should we remember these little things?

Possible response: Yes, young people and adults both overlook the perfect little things in their lives. We need to appreciate them because that will help us when big things go wrong.

2. What are some of the perfect little things in your life?

Answers will vary. Responses might include someone’s smile, a sunny day, a loving pet, a good friend, and so on.
Letter by Letter
The Last Nine Letters and One More Poem
pages 115–136

Before You Read
Making Predictions
In his last letter, Lonnie writes, “Peace was coming. Slowly. But it was on its way.”
How do you think Lonnie defines *peace* by this time?

I predict: Possible prediction: Lonnie thinks that peace means the war will be over, and all of the soldiers can come home, or being at home with himself.

Based on what evidence?
Jenkins is home, but he and his brothers worry about all the other soldiers still getting hurt and dying in the war.

After You Read
Checking Predictions
Based on what you read, was your prediction about Lonnie’s definition of *peace* accurate?

Answers will vary. Possible response: Lonnie defines *peace* as safety and contentment in his own life.

Responding to the Story
1. In the letter on pages 115–116, why do you think Miss Edna’s singing helps Jenkins calm down? Why does everyone smile when Lonnie sings? Do they think he’s funny?

Possible response: Maybe Miss Edna sang the same song to Jenkins when he was a little boy. Everyone smiles at Lonnie because he is trying so hard to help Jenkins.

They don’t think Lonnie is funny; they think he is kind.

2. In the letter on page 131, Jenkins gives Lonnie rabbit ears as Miss Edna takes their picture. What does this tell Lonnie?

Jenkins thinks of Lonnie as his brother now.
3. Use the Venn diagram below to compare Lonnie’s poem at the beginning and his poem at the end of this book.

```
- Talks about finding peace in food and soft sheets; says peace can happen
- Mention his sister and Clyde; focus on peace

Imagine Peace

Imagine Peace Again
```

Both poems

**Analyzing the Writing**

1. This author never writes, “Jenkins is starting to feel better now,” but we know that he is. How does the author *show* us that Jenkins is getting better?

   Jenkins comes out of his room, talks to Lonnie, eats with the family, talks about his leg, discusses a book with Rodney, and so on.

2. On page 132, Lonnie writes, “And sometimes it feels like I’m just gonna fall right down under all that weight. But I don’t, Lili. I stay standing. I stay standing.” Lonnie is talking about helping Jenkins get out of his wheelchair. What else could Lonnie’s comments symbolize?

   Lonnie is telling his sister that he will not fall down under the weight of their parents’ death.
Making Connections
1. On page 120, Jenkins says that every time people think they've had a hard life, they meet someone whose life is just a little bit harder. Who does Jenkins think has had a harder life, himself or Lonnie? How do you know?

   Jenkins thinks Lonnie has had a harder life because earlier he asks Lonnie if he misses his parents. Then Jenkins says, “You’ve had a hard life, huh?” I think he is making a statement, not asking a question.

2. Can you always find someone who has a harder life than yours? Explain your answer.

   Ideally, students will realize that many people have much harder lives than most of us.
Wrap-up

Reviewing Predictions
Turn to page 5 of this guide to review your first predictions. How accurate were they?

Answers will vary.

Analyzing the Writing
1. Describe Jacqueline Woodson’s writing style in this book.

She writes in long sentences and some short ones, like people talk. Because she uses conversation-like writing that a 12-year-old would say, she doesn’t worry about exact grammar.

2. Do you think this author uses the same writing style in all of her books? Explain your answer.

Probably not, unless she is writing from the point of view of a boy like Lonnie.

Thinking About the Genre

Realistic Fiction
1. Does this story feel real to you? Why or why not?

Most students will think this story could happen. The characters are like people we know. The way they deal with their problems is very realistic.

2. What are some endings that would not be realistic for this story?

Possible responses: Jenkins suddenly learning how to walk and throwing away his crutches. Lonnie winning a big award for his poems.

3. What might be difficult about writing realistic fiction?

Possible responses: Creating believable characters; making the story seem as if it could really happen
Thinking About the Story Elements

1. Use this chart to graph the introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution of this story.

**climax**
Lonnie overhears Miss Edna tells Jenkins that he has to live his life. Lonnie decides to make sure Lili is living her life. Maybe now he understands that he has to live his own, too.

[possible second climax] Jenkins realizes that Lonnie has been through a lot, but he still is a real good kid.

**falling action**
Jenkins starts to deal with his missing leg. Lonnie helps him as much as possible.

**resolution**
Jenkins is almost back to being himself; Lonnie is very glad to be part of his new family.

**rising action**
Jenkins loses his leg in the war and comes home; he spends most of his time in his room. Lonnie misses his parents and his sister very much; he withdraws on the anniversary of the fire that killed them.

**introduction**
Lonnie is living with his foster mom Miss Edna and her son Rodney; another son, Jenkins, is fighting in a war; Lonnie’s sister Lili lives with another foster mom.

2. What is the theme of this book? What lesson does the author want readers to remember?

**Possible responses:** Your family is the people who love you. You need to live your life, no matter what happens. Life can be difficult, but you can be strong.
Making Connections

1. *Peace, Locomotion* is the sequel to *Locomotion*. If this author writes another book about Lonnie, would you like to read it? Explain your answer. [Responses will vary.]

2. Let’s say the next sequel describes Lonnie as he turns 17. What might he be doing? Does he still write poems? What kinds of problems might he face in this new book? [Responses will vary.]

3. Which character in this story do you like best? How is one of the characters like you? How are you different from this character? [Responses will vary.]
**Library Applications**

**Thanking Soldiers**

Your town or city probably has soldiers returning from the war. Some of them might have been injured, as Jenkins was. Your community also probably has veterans who served in a war years or decades ago.

Help students find out what kinds of helpful services are available for veterans of all ages in your community. Then guide your class to find a way to honor or help these brave men and women. Sending them thank-you notes might be a good start.

You also might find out if groups in your community are gathering supplies, such as toothpaste and other personal items, to send to soldiers overseas. Your class might help gather the items, sort them, or pack them.

**Defining Peace**

Have a discussion about how Lonnie thinks of peace at the end of this book and have students share their own ideas of what peace means. Brainstorm images they might use to express their ideas.

Encourage students, working individually or with partners, to make posters that show their definition of peace. They can use cutouts from magazines or newspapers, markers, paint, CD covers, or whatever reminds them of the meaning of peace.

When the posters are finished, arrange to display them in a school hallway. Perhaps other classes would like to share their ideas about peace, too. You might attach a large note card to each poster so viewers can add their responses and comments.

Your students might also work together to write and post some guidelines that will help spread peace throughout your school. For example: “Find the good in each other instead of being critical.”
Library Applications

Writing Poems

Explain free verse to your students. Say:

_The kind of poetry Locomotion writes is called free verse. In free verse, the words don’t have to rhyme and the lines can be as long or short as you want. It is call “free” because you are free to write whatever you want in whatever way you want: with or without punctuation and capitalization, with one-word lines or long, long lines. You write it the way you feel it._

Encourage students to being keeping their own poetry journal in which they can write whatever kind of poems they want.

Sharing Poetry and Poets

Organize small groups and invite students to read aloud some of their favorite poems, written by themselves or other poets, memorized or not. Listeners then might respond to the imagery and ideas in the poem. You might consider a nationwide high-school program called _Poetry Out Loud_, supported by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation. This program is a competition, but yours can be included or it can be just for fun. Some students might enjoy reading poetry aloud for another class, perhaps with younger students.

Also, make a list of students' favorite poets and gather books of their poetry for everyone to browse through.

Health Connection

Mental health is as important as physical health. Offer students a list of topics to research that are common mental health issues faced by returning veterans. These could include:

- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Severe depression
- Chronic anxiety
- Mental stress
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Suicide
Suggestions for Further Reading

Other books by Jacqueline Woodson:


Nonfiction books:

About foster families:


About loved ones in war:

## Correlations to National Standards
### For Grades 5–8

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