

Dear Students,

Each school year, you are given summer reading assignments. Of course, students are also encouraged to read to their delight beyond the assigned books. Read below about the all school required reading.

Required all high school summer reading for grades 9-12: *BROWN GIRL DREAMING* by Jacqueline Woodson.

This book is available on Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and many other bookstores, including the Juniper Tree (call ahead to check for availability).

Best Practices:

- Investigate the author's biography for yourself to give you more context.
- Make sure to read all the questions below before and during your reading, taking notes for yourself in the process.
- ***Bring your book and prepared responses to the questions listed below on the first day of school. These will be submitted to the high school faculty during main lesson. All students are expected to participate in the discussions about the book. Seniors, in their special role, will be asked to facilitate and guide the underclassmen in the first day's discussion.***

Choose four or more from the following free-response questions. As a support for discussion, give page numbers for reader's reference.

1. Why does Woodson structure her memoir into five distinct parts? What are those five parts? How are they structured? How does this choice add to the story?
2. In what style is *Brown Girl Dreaming* written? Do you enjoy this format for an autobiography? Select your favorite scene, and provide details that paint the picture of the setting or moment that Woodson was trying to convey.
3. Jacqueline shares her childhood experiences amidst the backdrop of the Civil Rights movement. Using your prior knowledge or an online encyclopedia, discuss what role history plays in this book. What connections can you make between this book and people and events during this time period?
4. Throughout the book, Woodson formats and lays out her poetry purposefully. Cite examples. What effect does this have on the meaning of the text as a whole? Were there any examples of her words, phrasing, capitalization, and/or formatting affecting you as a reader? In what ways does Woodson manipulate words, phrasing, and white space in her writing? How does this influence your reading of the book?
5. What journey does Woodson go through to discover who she is? What and/or who are the strongest influences or key moments in Jacqueline's journey to define her own identity? How do they help her find her voice? Do you relate to any of her experiences? Why or why not?
6. While growing up, Jacqueline lived in the American North and South at different seasons in her life. How were her relationships, her experiences, and her sense of self-shaped by differences in her locations? What effect does our

geographical culture have on our life experiences? For example, what elements unique to Texas have shaped you into who you are?

7. What are some important themes of the book? Identify at least two themes. What do they mean to Jacqueline? What do they mean to you?

8. Jacqueline Woodson is a major voice in the campaign for more publication of diverse books. For more information, visit <https://diversebooks.org/>. In light of the, We Need Diverse Books campaign, does *Brown Girl Dreaming* promote diversity and if so, how? Give examples.

9. Why did Woodson give the book this title? What does it say about the author? What does it say about the world?

10. What is Jacqueline's attitude toward God and religion? How does she seem conflicted? Have you ever experienced a conflict like this in your own life? How do you see this conflict manifest globally today?

11. Is this book relevant and/or relatable for young readers today? If so, which themes from the book continue to be relevant in the lives of youth? Do you think it's important for people who don't necessarily identify with Jacqueline's specific experience to read this book? Why or why not?

12. 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? If so, what did it feel like? If not, what might this feel like?

13. 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? Where do you hope to see change in the future?

If you have questions over the summer, please feel free to contact Victoria Reyes at vreyes@austinwaldorf.org.

Thank you,

Ms. Victoria Reyes