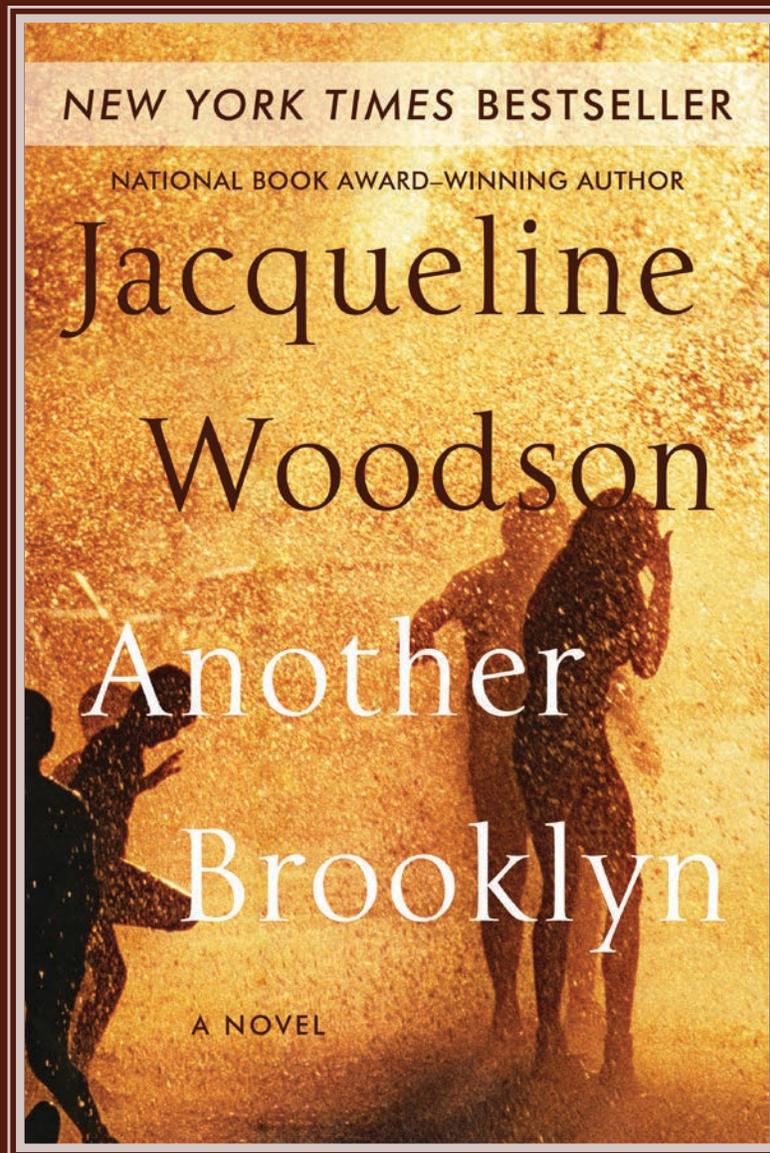


A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO



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



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Contents

About the Book	3
About the Author	3
Guided Reading Questions	4
Chapter 1	4
Chapter 2	4
Chapter 3	4
Chapter 4	4
Chapter 5	5
Chapter 6	5
Chapter 7	5
Chapter 8	5
Chapter 9	6
Chapter 10	6
Chapter 11	6
Chapter 12	6
Chapter 13	6
Chapter 14	7
Chapter 15	7
Chapter 16	7
Writing Prompts	7

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 Sweet-Grove. 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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