

Teacher Guide: "Main Street" by Jacqueline Woodson

Text Dependent Questions

1. In "Main Street," seasons are mentioned six times (can you find them all?). Seasons often represent change. How does that relate to the larger theme of the story?
2. How does Treetop's friendship with Celeste differ from her friendships with Lisabeth and Casey?
3. "Neither of us knew that exactly eight days from that moment, my mother would move on to the next place." In what other ways is this story about moving on?
4. What was Celeste's experience moving to Peterborough like? How might her experience have been different if the story were set in the present day?
5. Throughout the story, Treetop reflects on the relationships in her life and how they impacted her. Think of an important relationship in your own life, current or past, and reflect on how it has impacted you. Is your experience similar to or different from Treetop's?

Text-specific Considerations

- This text presents opportunities for students to practice their critical literacy skills. You could start with something easier, like asking students if they can relate to Celeste's experience of moving somewhere new or Treetop's experience of having a friend move away, and then ask them how that affects the way they read the story. From there, you could move on to more advanced questions like asking how their race or gender affects their experience of reading the story.
- Consider who the students are in your classroom. Does it make sense to bring in outside resources to help students understand the history of cultural significance of Black hair? How will you approach questions about the stereotyping in the story differently based on your classroom demographics? Also, if you have students who have dealt with a big loss in their lives like Treetop does, be mindful of that when asking them to read this story.
- Where do you teach and how does that affect their understanding of the setting? Do your students have a frame of reference for what fall is like in a small New England town?
- Consider applying a psychoanalytic lens to the analysis of this text as Woodson is Black and writing from the perspective of a white character? Why do you think she made this choice? How did it allow her to touch on the experiences of Celeste differently than if it had been written from Celeste's perspective?