

Educator Information and Directions

This PDF provides the materials that accompany the lesson “*Brown Girl Dreaming*.” This PDF contains activities for students to complete before, during, and after they read the poem. Highlighted words within the poem indicate vocabulary words that will be referred to in assessment questions.

Student Reading Guide

Before Reading

- Read some information about today’s poem.
- Start thinking about the topics in the poem by answering the questions.

During Reading

- Read the **Purpose for Reading**.
- Read the poem.
- Take notes and annotate what you are reading.

After Reading

- Reflect on what you have read by answering the questions.
- Complete the **Online Assessment** questions.

Taking Notes and Annotating

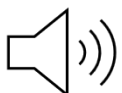
Here are some strategies for annotating and taking notes **in the text itself**:

- **Highlight** or underline important words or words you don’t know.
- **Circle** key concepts and ideas.
- Use abbreviations or symbols. For example:

?	To show confusion or questions
FL	To identify figurative language
★	To identify imagery
SD	To identify sound devices

Here are some strategies for annotating and taking notes **in the notes section** under the text:

- Summarize key points in your own words.
- Write brief comments and questions.

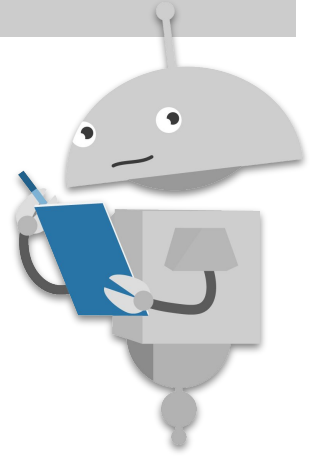


If you would prefer to listen to the poem, click the link to access an audio recording: [Link to Audio Recording of Poem](#)

Before Reading

Today's poem is an excerpt from the novel in verse, *Brown Girl Dreaming*, that brings the reader into a family's shared experiences and hopes for the American dream.

Before you read today's poem, think about the phrase, "American dream" and what that might have meant for different people throughout history.



What does the "American dream" mean to you? Write or draw below to share your thoughts.



Think about a story of your family that has been passed down to you, or about a family story you wish you knew more about. Write or draw below as you reflect on this piece of family history.

During Reading



Purpose for Reading: Today's excerpt is from *Brown Girl Dreaming*, a memoir written by Jacqueline Woodson. This verse novel is a collection of poems about the author's life growing up as an African American girl during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. As you read the chapter, titled "american dream," think about how the author uses poetry to shape the story of her family.

While you read, remember to annotate and take notes! You can review strategies for annotation on Page 1 of this PDF.

Excerpt from *Brown Girl Dreaming*, by Jacqueline Woodson

american dream

(1) *Even when my girls were little, we'd go down there,
my grandmother tells us. And **people'd** be marching.*

The marching didn't just start yesterday.

Police with those dogs, scared everybody

(5) *near to death. Just once*

I let my girls march.

My grandmother leans back in her brown chair,

her feet still in the Epsom salts water,

her fingers tapping out

(10) *some silent tune. She closes her eyes.*

I let them and I prayed.

(continued)

Notes

During Reading (continued)



Excerpt from *Brown Girl Dreaming*, by Jacqueline Woodson
(continued)

*What's the thing, I ask her, that would make people
want to live together?*

People have to want it, that's all.

(15) We get quiet—maybe all of us are thinking about
the ones who want it. And the ones who don't.

*We all have the same dream, my grandmother says.
To live equal in a country that's supposed to be
the land of the free.*

(20) She lets out a long breath,
deep remembering.

*When your mother was little
she wanted a dog. But I said no.
Quick as you can blink, I told her,*

(25) *a dog will turn on you.*

(continued)

Notes

During Reading (continued)



Excerpt from *Brown Girl Dreaming*, by Jacqueline Woodson
(continued)

So my mother brought kittens home,
soft and purring inside of empty boxes
mewing and mewing until my grandmother
fell in love. And let her keep them.

- (30) My grandmother tells us all this
as we sit at her feet, each story like a photograph
we can look right into, see our mother there
marchers and dogs and kittens all blending
and us now
- (35) there in each moment
beside her.

Woodson, Jacqueline. *Brown Girl Dreaming*. Penguin, 2019.

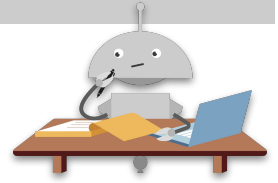
Notes



After Reading



Create a comic strip that uses four important moments from the poem to build a summary. You may write descriptively or draw in each square to retell the poem as a comic.



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Choose one line from the poem that stands out to you and describe why it is significant to the poem's message.

After you are done reading and answering these questions, you may want to ask yourself some more questions, like...

- What figurative language is used in this poem?
- What is the theme of the poem?

You may even want to read the poem a second or third time! When you feel ready, go ahead and take your assessment!