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Jacqueline Woodson: Keeping it real

Learn more about the author of *Locomotion*. Then answer the questions on the next page.



Jacqueline Woodson didn't just write *Locomotion*. She has written over 20 books for teens and children. Woodson's books focus on characters: Lonnie who loses his parents; Lena and Dion, sisters who run away; and D Foster, who loves hip-hop.

The young characters in Woodson's books face serious issues. Sometimes, adults have a problem with this. One book, *If You Come Softly*, was banned. Some schools and libraries took the book off their shelves. Parents and teachers didn't want teens reading a love story about a White girl and a Black boy. Woodson's book, *I Hadn't Meant to Tell You This*, was also banned. One of the characters is a victim of abuse.

Woodson brushes off the critics. "I write about real stuff," she says. She wants all kinds of readers to see themselves in her work. In *Feathers*, the main character's brother is deaf. In *Hush*, a family hides in a witness protection program. In books like these, readers get to see life in someone else's shoes. They also think about questions that touch everyone: Who am I? Should I fit in or stand out? Where do I belong?

Woodson has many fans. Her book *Miracle's Boys*, about three orphan brothers, became a TV series. Spike Lee directed. Dr. Dre played a small role. Tiki Barber played a football coach. Bud'da did the music. These stars came together to put Woodson's work on screen.

On the website Reading Rockets, Woodson talked about writing books. "The thing I try to do as a writer is bring worlds to the page. What happens with readers is they step inside those worlds . . . That world is real, and you're a part of it."

In *Locomotion*, we'll get to step inside Lonnie's world.

Jacqueline Woodson: Keeping it real, continued

→ How many teen and children's books has Woodson written?

→ What are two of the characters in Woodson's books?

→ Which book by Woodson would you be most interested in reading?

→ Why does this book interest you?

→ Why were some of Woodson's books banned in schools and libraries?

→ Woodson says her job as a writer is to create a world on the pages of the book. Readers walk into that world and learn more about the lives of the characters.

From what you have read so far in *Locomotion*, what is **one question** you have about Lonnie's world? What do you want to know more about?
