

Guide to:

The Day You Begin

Written by Jacqueline Woodson and illustrated by Rafael López

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Language: English

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Genre: Fiction

Lexile: AD980L

Guided Reading Level: P

Grade Level:
Kindergarten – Grade 3

Featured Country of Origin: N/A

Themes: Diversity, courage,
acceptance and belonging

Publisher's Synopsis

There are many reasons to feel different. Maybe it's how you look or talk, or where you're from; maybe it's what you eat, or something just as random. It's not easy to take those first steps into a place where nobody really knows you yet, but somehow you do it. Jacqueline Woodson's lyrical text and Rafael López's dazzling art remind us that we all feel like outsiders sometimes and how brave it is that we go forth anyway. And that sometimes, when we reach out and begin to share our stories, others will be happy to meet us halfway.

What We Love

This story about feelings of isolation and drawing on inner strength offers multiple entry points for students. Whether it's language, food, appearance, dress or athletic ability, there are many ways that children can feel like outsiders. This story beautifully illustrates the importance of celebrating both our differences and similarities.

Background

Every year for the last decade, an increasing number of young people have reported feelings of loneliness and isolation. Immigrant students in particular report that they do not feel like they can be themselves at school and do not feel like part of their school's community. Teachers can help by creating welcoming classrooms and promoting connections among students.

Vocabulary

- Blooming: Growing or developing
- Fabulously: In a very good way
- Fragile: Easily broken or damaged
- Homeland: The country where someone was born or raised
- Kimchi: Korean spicy pickled cabbage
- Laughter: The sound that laughing makes
- Souvenir: Something you keep as a reminder of places you have visited
- Triumph: A great success or victory
- Unfamiliar: Not frequently seen or heard
- Untraveled: Not having been to many places
- Journey: Traveling from one place to another
- Steady: Secure and not moving
- Steel: Hard strong metal
- Brave: Doing something even though you are scared



The Day You Begin (continued)

Pre-Reading Focus Questions

- Have you ever noticed that you were different from other people in the room? How did that make you feel?
- Have you ever felt left out or lonely on the first day of school?
- Have you ever wanted to share a story, but you were too nervous or afraid?

Extension/Higher-Level Thinking

- Think of a time that you felt different at school. Draw a picture to share what that experience was like for you.
- If you could give this book another title, what would you choose and why?
- The characters in the story each have their own challenges/problems. Identify each character's challenges/problems and how they worked through them. Do the characters have any shared challenges/problems? Which challenges/problems are explained directly to the reader, and which require inferencing? Which solutions are explained directly to the reader, and which require inferencing?

After-Reading Discussion Questions

- Why is Angelina afraid to share the stories about her summer? How do you think she feels about the stories her classmates share?
- How did Angelina change as she opened up about her summer experiences?
- How does the character with the lunchbox feel when the children stare at her? Have you ever had anything like that happen to you?
- We all feel like outsiders sometimes. The author states, "There will be times when the world feels like a place that you are standing all the way outside of..." Locate and describe illustrations in the story that support this feeling?
- The author later states, "...the world opens itself up a little wider to make some space for you." Locate and describe illustrations in the story to support this feeling.

Interdisciplinary

This story can be connected to units on building classroom community, culturally responsive instruction and individual development and identity.

Additional Resources



Author Jacqueline Woodson reads "The Day You Begin" and discusses the symbolism of the ruler



TeachingBooks resources including audio pronunciation guides for author and illustrator's names, videos, lessons and more.



The **YouthTruth, Re-Imagining Migration survey** found that immigrant students need better help in school.



Read about **the "epidemic of loneliness" among students**

About the Book Author (from the author)

Jacqueline Woodson is an American writer of books for adults, children, and adolescents. She is best known for her National Book Award-Winning memoir *Brown Girl Dreaming*, and her Newbery Honor-winning titles *After Tupac and D Foster*, *Feathers*, and *Show Way*. Her picture books *The Day You Begin* and *The Year We Learned to Fly* were NY Times Bestsellers.

About the Book Illustrator (from the illustrator)

Rafael López is an internationally recognized illustrator and artist. His illustrations bring diverse characters to children's books and he is driven to produce and promote books that reflect and honor the lives of all young people. Born and raised in Mexico City to architect parents, López was immersed in the rich visual heritage, music and surrealism of his native culture.

About the Consultant Nicole Kwmuntis

Nicole Kwmuntis co-authored and provided guidance for this guide. She is currently a reading specialist for students in grades kindergarten through fourth grade at Malden Public Schools in Massachusetts. During her tenure in Malden, she has advocated for the literacy development of multilingual learners and supported extended learning experiences for multilingual learners beyond the school day.

About The Immigrant Learning Center

The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc. (The ILC) of Malden, MA, is a not-for-profit organization that gives immigrants a voice in three ways. The English Language Program provides free, year-round ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes to help immigrant and refugee adults in Greater Boston become successful workers, parents and community members. The Public Education Institute informs Americans about immigrants and immigration in the United States, and the Institute for Immigration Research, a joint venture with George Mason University, produces valid, reliable and objective multidisciplinary research on immigrants and immigration to the United States. For more information, visit the website <http://www.ilctr.org>. The ILC can also be found on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn.