

Deep Knowledge Building: *brown girl dreaming* Unit

The Reading Reconsidered curriculum is designed to build and reinforce students' knowledge for two primary purposes: first, to provide all students with access to a complex text and second, to create interconnected networks of knowledge that enable the skilled reading of future texts. Each lesson includes relevant knowledge to support comprehension of the central text in each unit and uses deliberate practice and retrieval to build a strong base of knowledge in long-term memory.

Unit Documents

Essential Understandings: This unit is designed with repeated exposure to the following conceptual understandings and themes:

- Memoir gives authors an opportunity to share meaningful personal stories about their lives in the context of a specific time and place; through *brown girl dreaming*, we learn about both Woodson's personal history and the events in history she lives through.
- Poetry is a different type of writing than prose, so some of our vocabulary and processes as readers change when we read poems.
- People are complex; their young life, experiences, and family history shape their world view as they grow. Part of growing up and developing one's beliefs is understanding the perspectives and beliefs of those around you.
- Woodson writes her memoir by combining the stories and memories of others with her own. Memory is subjective and unreliable, so it can be both beautiful and challenging to try to recount stories from memories.

Units provide repeated exposure to knowledge. These examples from the *brown girl dreaming* unit trace the introduction and reinforcement of two understandings: ancestry and memory.

Key Background Knowledge: Below is a list of some of the core knowledge emphasized over the course of interact with these concepts, in addition to other ancillary topics that will strengthen their understanding

Contextual Knowledge

- History of the American civil rights movement
- Language of ancestry and family history
- South Carolina and New York City in the 1960s-1970s

Literary Knowledge

- Terms of poetic construction and analysis (e.g., enjambment, anaphora, caesura, rhythm)
- Autobiographical writing and the language of memory in storytelling

Each unit includes a Knowledge Organizer, a one-page document that organizes high-priority knowledge for students to store in long-term memory.

Brown Girl Dreaming Knowledge Organizer

Poetic and Literary Terms		Language of Memory and Storytelling	
<i>Unlike prose, the ordinary language used in speaking or writing, verse has a rhythmic structure and often rhymes. Poems are written in verse.</i>		memoir	a collection of memories written about important moments and events in a person's life
Term	Definition	subjectivity	the way in which a person's memory or judgment is shaped by their personal opinions or experiences
anaphora	the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of lines or stanzas	reliability	the degree to which a person's narration or memory is trustworthy or accurate
caesura	a pause within a line of poetry, usually marked by punctuation	Words to Describe Family and Legacy	
end-stopped	a poetic line ending with punctuation to show the completion of a phrase	ancestry	the line of people in a family's past
enjambment	the running-over of a sentence or phrase from one poet c line to the next, without end punctuation	genealogy	an account of a person or family's descent from past generations
haiku	a Japanese poetic form; three unrhymed lines of 5, 7, and 5 syllables	heredity	the passing of personal characteristics from one family's generation to another; we say that a trait that is passed (e.g., brown eyes) is inherited or hereditary
poetic license	the understanding that a poet might change or "break" rules of grammar that govern other forms of writing	heritage	something acquired from the past; a person's cultural, religious, or racial background
rhythm	a pattern of sound set by the syllables in lines of poetry	Historical Terms	
stanza	a series of lines arranged together to create divisions in a poem	segregation	the practice of requiring separate housing, bussing, education, and other services for people based on race
Jaqueline Woodson's Family Timeline			
1832	Woodson's great-great-grandfather <u>is</u> born free in Ohio. At this time, slavery is still legal and practiced throughout the southern United States.		
1963	Jaqueline Woodson <u>is</u> born in Columbus, Ohio, <u>in the</u> <u>midst</u> of the civil rights movement .		
Mid- 1960s	Woodson and her family <u>move</u> in with their grandparents in Greenville, South Carolina.		
Late- 1960s	Woodson and her siblings <u>move</u> to Brooklyn, New York with their mother.		
civil rights movement	the struggle for social justice, beginning the in the 1950s, in which activists fought for Black Americans to gain equal rights under the law		
nonviolent resistance	the idea that a person can resist and defeat an oppressive system without violence; examples of nonviolent protest include sit-ins, marches, and boycotts		
Great Migration	the movement of more than 6 million Black Americans from the rural South to cities in the North, Midwest, and West from about 1916-1970		
Black Power Movement	a movement within the civil rights movement focused on Black pride and self-defense		

Sample Lesson

- **Lesson Objective:** Describe how Woodson connects herself to her family's history.
- **In the Lesson:** Students analyze the first poem in the memoir in order to consider the way Woodson places her birth in the context of both her family's and America's history.
- **Priority Standard:** Reading Anchor Standard 6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Pages 1-2

Introduction of the term **memoir**

Annotation Task: *brown girl dreaming* is a **memoir**, meaning it is a collection of memories written about important moments and events in a person's life. As we read the first poem in Jaqueline Woodson's memoir, circle the words, phrases, or lines that you find most **evocative**.

1. **Turn and Talk:** Share your annotations with a partner. Why did you choose these moments? What images or feelings do they **evoke** for you?
2. What is Woodson describing in this poem? Why is it called "february 12, 1963"?

Notes

3. Reread this stanza from p. 1:

*I am born not long from the time
or far from the place
where
my great-great-grandparents
worked the deep rich land
unfree
dawn till dusk
unpaid
drank cool water from scooped-out gourds
looked up and followed
the sky's mirrored constellation
to freedom.*

Students practice applying the concept of a **memoir**.

- a. **Turn and Talk:** What is Woodson sharing about her great-great-grandparents in this stanza? How do you know? **Challenge:** How might the **rhythm** of the poem emphasize this idea?
- b. Slavery was declared illegal in 1865, almost 100 years before Woodson was born. What might Woodson be suggesting when she says she was born "not long from the time" of her great-great-grandparents' enslavement?

Students unlock the memoir's complexity with the knowledge they bring and build.

Knowledge is introduced through direct instruction and students apply it to the text to support their comprehension and deepen analysis.

february 12, 1963

Cycle 1: Read Aloud - annotate words/phrases, lines you find evocative
Q1: share and

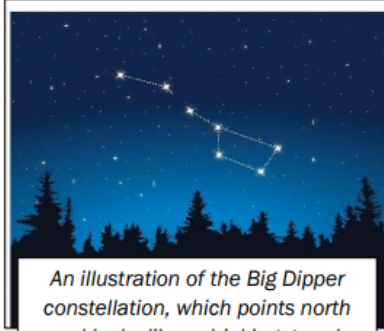
I am born on a Tuesday at University Hospital
Columbus, Ohio,
USA—
a country caught
between Black and White. *evocative: Kriston*

I am born not long from the time *Q2, Q3b*
or far from the place
where
my great-great-grandparents
worked the deep rich land *Q3a*
unfree
dawn till dusk *evocative: amber*
unpaid
drank cool water from scooped-out gourds
looked up and followed
the sky's mirrored constellation *Q4*
to freedom.

Cycle 2: FASE
still I am born as the South explodes *Q2, Q5*
too many people too many years *evocative: surprise, horror*

"Follow the Drinking Gourd"

A drinking gourd is a spoon- or cup-like container that can be used to scoop and serve water. In slaveholding states in the American south, the term "drinking gourd" is thought to have been used as a code to refer to the Big Dipper constellation, a formation of stars that looks like a water dipper. This constellation points to the North Star, so it can be used as a navigation tool to help travelers—or escaping enslaved people—find their way north. The American folk song "Follow the Drinking Gourd," popular during the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, describes enslaved people using the "drinking gourd" of the Big Dipper as a guide to help them flee north to freedom.



Nonfiction articles are to introduce terms, explain references, or explain relevant concepts. Students apply their knowledge by responding to overlapping questions drawing on both texts.

4. On p. 1, what is Woodson referring to when she describes the "sky's mirrored constellation"? Why might she include this reference in the poem?

Notes

Students use the embedded text "Follow the Drinking Gourd" to understand Woodson's allusion in the poem and learn about the author's **ancestry**.

6. Reread the final stanza:

*I am born in Ohio but
the stories of South Carolina already run
like rivers
through my veins.*

- a. **Turn and Talk:** What does it mean that Woodson has "the stories of South Carolina" in her veins, even though she was born in Ohio? Why might this be?
- b. Complete the following sentences:

- Woodson is connected to South Carolina **because** _____
- Woodson is connected to South Carolina, **but** _____
- Woodson is connected to South Carolina, **so** _____

Students discuss and write about **ancestry** using different conjunctions to develop their thinking and vary sentence construction.

Students use a variety of discussion and writing prompts to analyze the novel through a knowledge lens while developing other core skills.

Memoir

The word memoir comes from the French word for “memory.” This is a helpful way of understanding what a memoir is: an author’s telling of their own life, the way they remember it. Even though memoirs are nonfiction—the author tells the true story of their real life—memoirs are uniquely subjective because they are told from just one person’s experience and perspective. A memoir can be honest, but still not perfectly accurate; in fact, most of them are probably not.



Students deepen their knowledge of memoir by reading a second short embedded text on the genre.

Memoirs are extremely popular, often topping best-seller lists. Reading memoir gives us a peek into the lives of others, and also helps us understand what life was like in a particular place during a particular time. Authors of memoir often weave personal stories with broader historical and social context so that they can more vividly evoke the time and place of their experiences.

- **Read: Read Aloud** or use **FASE Reading** to read the embedded text titled “Memoir” to build students’ genre knowledge. While reading, you may wish to ask one or more of the following questions to establish meaning:
 - **Possible Establish Meaning Questions**
 - *Is **memoir** fiction or nonfiction? What does that mean?*
 - ***Subjectivity** is a term on your Knowledge Organizer that means the way in which a person’s memory or judgment is shaped by their personal opinions or experiences. What does it mean that **memoirs** are “uniquely **subjective**”?*
 - *Can you think of any **memoirs** you’ve read and enjoyed? Whose **memoir**...*

Lesson plan provides additional questioning to support student understanding of a memoir.

Every lesson plan includes guidance to help teachers make knowledge purposeful and relevant for students and increase their investment.

Exit Ticket

1. What does it mean that *brown girl dreaming* is a **memoir**? What do you anticipate we will learn in this **memoir**? Include a reference to a specific place and/or time.

Daily Exit Tickets assess student understanding of the novel, often through a knowledge-driven lens.

Additional Opportunities for Retrieval

In addition to the knowledge introduced and reinforced in daily lessons through embedded texts and questioning, each unit includes further opportunities for retrieval, practice, and application of knowledge.

Do Now Quiz—Knowledge

1. What is a **memoir**? (1 point)
 - a. the way in which a person’s memory or judgment is shaped by their personal opinions or experiences
 - b. a collection of memories written about important moments and events in a person’s life
 - c. the degree to which a person’s narration or memory is trustworthy or accurate
 - d. a fond remembering of the past, especially a longing for a time or place with happy personal memories

Weekly Knowledge and Vocabulary Quizzes reinforce important knowledge in the unit.

6. What does **ancestry** mean? Describe one thing we know about Jacqueline Woodson’s **ancestry**. (2 points)

Retrieval Practice

Use the word or phrase from the Knowledge Organizer in your response.

1. What is **ancestry**?
2. What is a trait that might be **hereditary**?
3. Name the movement happening in America in the 1960s.
4. What term refers to an account of a person or family’s descent from past generations?
5. What is a **memoir**?

Frequent, low-stakes Retrieval Practice helps students encode knowledge into long-term memory.

Evidence of Impact

Pre-Unit Assessment

1. Your **ancestry** is the line of people in your family's past.

What are some different ways that your ancestry can shape or influence who you will become? Try to think of more than one.

by my ancestor knowing someone famous or starting a business that was pass down to there and to there kids.

Pre-Assessment

2. A **memoir** is a collection of memories written about important moments and events in a person's life.

- a. Why might an author want to write a memoir?

first so the authors family can see what his life was like for him and

Post-Unit Assessment

1. What is **ancestry**? What are some different ways that ancestry can shape or influence who a person will become? Use details from *brown girl dreaming* to support your response. Include a form of the word **inherited**, **hereditary**, or **genealogy** in your response.

Ancestry is a line of people in a family's or person's past, your ancestors can shape you of how you can become by listening to their pasts, their stories, their wisdom, it can be hereditary.

Post-Assessment

2. Answer the following questions, using details from Jacqueline Woodson's memoir, *brown girl dreaming*, in your responses.

- a. Define **memoir**. Why might an author want to write a memoir?

A memoir is a very important collection of memories that have moments of events in a person's life. The author wants to write a memoir because in the book, it tells us about a woodson's past, the stories of South Carolina flowing through Jae's veins according to Page 2

Students are given a pre- and post-unit assessment that ask the same questions in order to gauge the extent to which they retain and apply knowledge of core concepts by the end of the unit.