

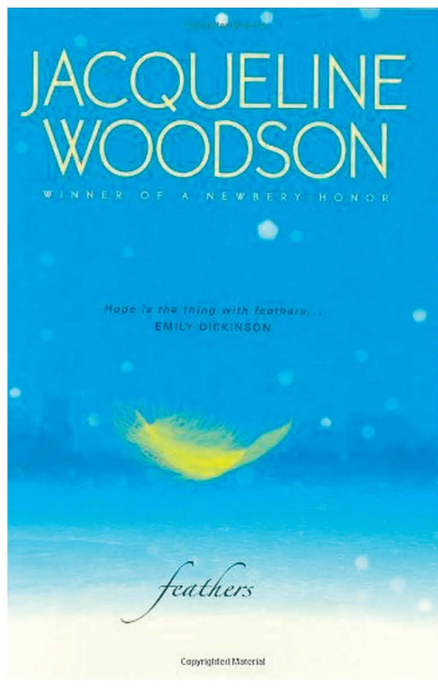
# Reading <sup>with</sup> Relevance

Building Independent Readers and Thinkers

A TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR

*Feathers*

A novel by Jacqueline Woodson



Recommended for:  
Grade Levels  
4th-6th

# A tool to inspire change

This literacy curriculum is constructed around a content-rich novel that builds students' literacy skills and supports their character development and self-confidence. Students are motivated to read because they relate to the strong, diverse, and resilient characters featured in our selected novels and because each session gives them the opportunity to connect what they've read to their own lives.

Developed, field-tested, and refined in our own tutoring and mentoring programs, this Common Core Standards curriculum has inspired persistently low-performing students to engage with literature, make meaning in their lives, and improve their English language arts skills. Now, *Reading with Relevance* is available to help you dig deep into the social, emotional, and academic needs of your students, whether in your classroom, after-school program, or youth development agency!



This novel explores how Frannie, an outspoken 11-year-old girl, comes to develop a keen understanding of difference when a new kid, who is different from all the other kids in her class, appears at her school. We chose this book for its courageous exploration of important social and emotional themes: race, disability, grief, adoption, and hope. This curriculum will inspire students to build connections between Frannie's transformative life story and their own.

## This teacher's guide includes:

- A facilitator's guide with tips and resources for implementing the curriculum.
- A map of Common Core Standards addressed through this program.
- Eight individual lesson plans, including vocabulary, discussion questions, journal prompts, extension activities, and all handouts.
- Two assessments to monitor student progress throughout the program.
- Regular checkpoints to help teachers assess their students' progress on ELA standards.
- A culminating essay-writing unit.
- An appendix with additional teaching resources and activities to continue exploring this novel.



# Session 2

pages 16-28

## Vocabulary

**shivered** (pg. 17): v.,  
shook, usually when cold

**pockmark** (pg. 25) n.,  
scar left by chicken pox

**squinted** (pg. 27): adj.,  
squeezed together

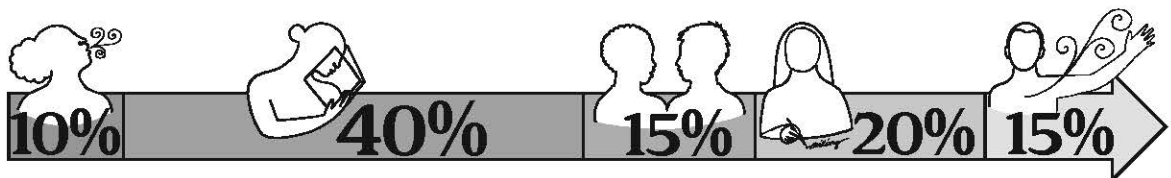
**sagged** (pg. 27): v.,  
drooped, fell over

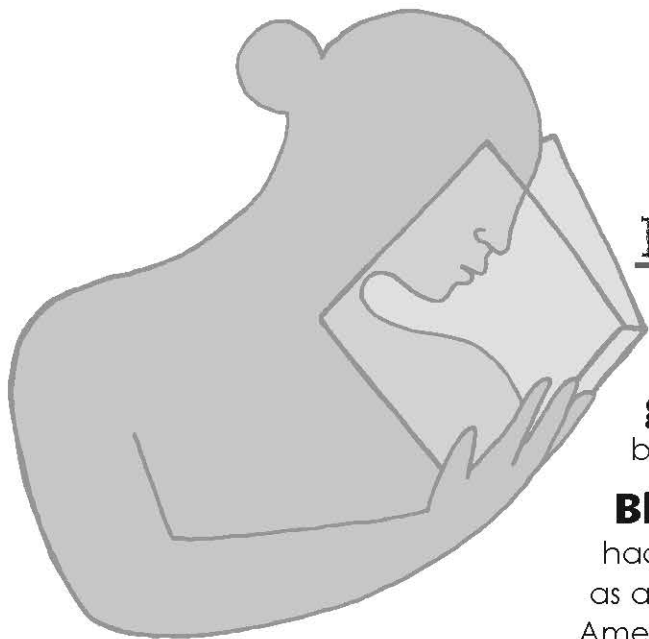
## Today's Themes

Today's theme are **freedom** and **community**. What does it mean to be free? What does oppression look like? Today's session explores some of these questions. Several of the characters, including Sean and Maribel, want to experience life on the other side of the highway; they want to feel more free. Frannie also explains more about her neighborhood in this session. Ask your students why they think Sean and Maribel want to move away from their community. Your students may have similar feelings about their own communities; invite them to draw on their experience to relate to the book. Your students might also know of a place nearby that represents the "other side of the highway," or a different kind of community. Encourage them to imagine what this other community might look like, and how it might differ from Frannie's neighborhood and their own.

## Session 1 Recap

In the opening session, Frannie introduces us to many of the main characters in *Feathers*. A new student, Jesus Boy, arrives in Price School's sixth grade class. Unlike the other kids in his class, he is white. He is almost immediately teased by Trevor, the class bully who is known for his temper. Frannie also reveals that she lives with her mother, father, and brother Sean, who is deaf. As a result, Frannie knows sign language and does some signing in the first couple chapters.





## During Reading

**jive turkey** (pg. 20): a 1970s slang word for someone who is full of himself

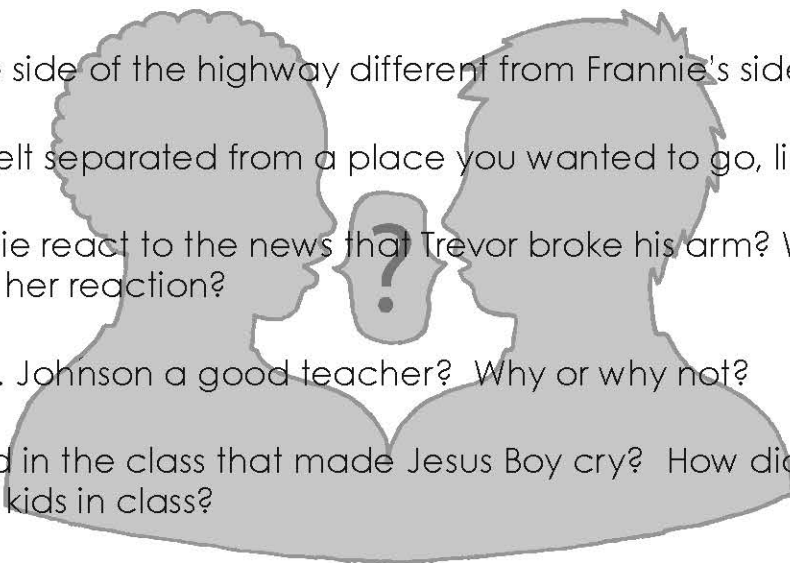
**goulash** (pg. 22): a Hungarian stew of beef and vegetables

**Black Power** (pg. 24): A movement that had its height in the 1970s when it emerged as a response to both brutality against African-Americans and the non-violent movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In contrast, the Black Power Movement, epitomized by the Black Panther Party, justified the use of violence in order to achieve its goals.

**chicken pox** (pg. 25) a disease that causes fever, headache, fatigue, and itchy blisters that cover the body. It was a common disease for children.

## Discussion Questions

- What do you learn in this session about Frannie's side of the highway?
- How is the white side of the highway different from Frannie's side?
- Have you ever felt separated from a place you wanted to go, like Sean?
- How does Frannie react to the news that Trevor broke his arm? What do you think about her reaction?
- Do you think Ms. Johnson a good teacher? Why or why not?
- What happened in the class that made Jesus Boy cry? How did his tears affect the other kids in class?
- What would you have done if you were in the class? How would you have supported him?



# Journal Prompt

## FREEDOM

- Frannie says kids on her side of the highway were always trying to “figure out ways to fly and run and cross over things and...get free or something.”

**What do you think the kids are trying to get free from?**

- » What do they hope awaits them on the other side of the highway?
- » How do you imagine it feels to be really free?
- » What in your life do you hope to free yourself from?

## EMOTIONS

- Jesus Boy starts crying in class when Rayray and some of the other students pick on him.

**Write about a time when you cried or felt like crying at school.**

- » What happened? What made you feel so sad?
- » How did it feel to express your emotions in that moment?
- » Are there different rules about expressing emotions for boys and girls? What do you think about this?
- » Why is it important for all people to express their emotions?

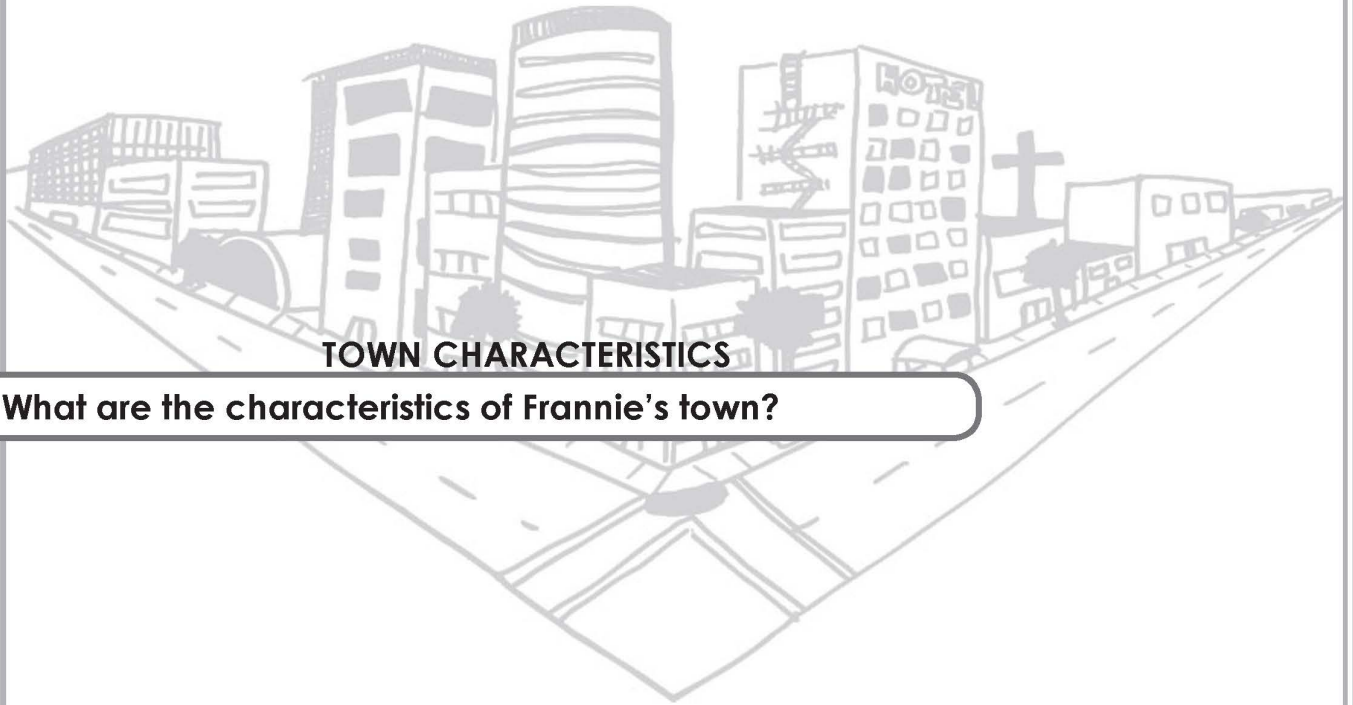
## Extension Activity

In the story, we learn about Frannie's community. Have students imagine where Frannie lives and fill out the “Community Characteristics” worksheet. Encourage students to cite examples from the reading and to think about what makes Frannie's community similar to or different from their own.

### Materials:

- » Community Characteristics Handout

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



### TOWN CHARACTERISTICS

What are the characteristics of Frannie's town?

### PEOPLE CHARACTERISTICS

What do you know about the people who live in Frannie's town?

### COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

How do the people in Frannie's community behave towards each other?

Thinking about what you have read about Frannie's community so far, answer the questions above using as many examples from the story as possible.

## Community Characteristics

# Appendix

## Additional Activities

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### Get to Know MFI

**Moving Forward Institute** is a nonprofit publisher of social justice educational materials. The organization was created by the founders and staff of Moving Forward Education, a multi-generational tutoring and mentoring organization aimed at fostering academic and emotional success for underserved students in California. Since our founding in 2003, MFE has provided tutoring and mentoring services to thousands of students and has trained hundreds of young adults to enter careers in the educational field. This reading curriculum was developed by our leadership team and its advisory group, including credentialed teachers and college professors. This program has been successfully facilitated throughout California by achieving powerful and measurable results for students and schools. To learn more about our organization, or our research and data, please contact us today.

### Our Purpose

*At Moving Forward Institute, we know that students can be successful learners when their social and emotional needs are met.*

*We empower educators to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of their students by using culturally-relevant and gender-responsive reading curricula.*

### Training and Professional Development Services

*While lesson plans are designed to be easily facilitated by classroom teachers and after-school staff alike, our in-person training and professional development services will ensure fully effective implementation of the literacy curricula.*

*Additionally, we offer technical support, classroom observation, and program evaluation services to help your program be successful. Contact us for more information about these services!*

### Contact Us

*Contact us today to learn more about how the Moving Forward Institute can support your students and staff!*

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### If your students liked *Feathers*. . .

*...they might love some of our other book selections! We suggest that you check out One Crazy Summer, Inside Out & Back Again, or Bud, Not Buddy. Please visit our website today to browse our full selection of socially and emotionally rich novel-based curricula!*