



Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Department

About the Book of the Month: This collection of featured books is from Books Matter: The Best Kid Lit on Bias, Diversity and Social Justice. The books teach about bias and prejudice, promote respect for diversity, encourage social action and reinforce themes addressed in education programs of [A World of Difference® Institute](#), ADL's international anti-bias education and diversity training provider. For educators, adult family members and other caregivers of children, reading the books listed on this site with your children and incorporating them into instruction are excellent ways to talk about these important concepts at home and in the classroom.

Harbor Me

Jacqueline Woodson (Author)

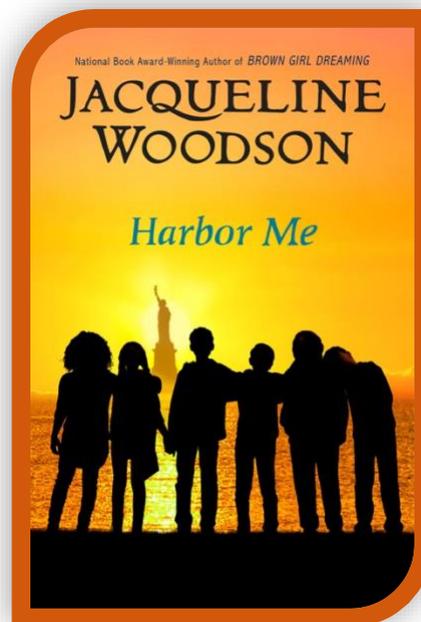
It all starts when six young people are told by their teacher that they will meet for a weekly chat—by themselves, with no adults to listen in. There, in what they soon dub the ARTT Room (short for "A Room to Talk"), they discover it is safe to talk about what's bothering them—everything from Esteban's father's deportation and Haley's father's incarceration to Amari's fears of racial profiling and Ashton's adjustment to his changing family fortunes. When the six are together, they can express the feelings and fears that they hide from the rest of the world. And together, they grow braver and more ready for the rest of their lives.

ISBN: 978-0399252525

Publisher: Nancy Paulsen Books

Year Published: 2018

Age Range: 10 and up



Book Themes

Ally Behavior, Friendship, Identity, Immigration and Deportation, Race and Racism

Key Words

Discuss and define these words with students prior to reading the book and remind them of the words' meanings as they come up in the book. See also ADL's [Education Glossary Terms](#).

- accent
- acronym
- albino
- ashamed

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|--------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| ■ betray | ■ embarrassed | ■ nervous | ■ threatening |
| ■ catastrophe | ■ familiar | ■ paced | ■ tragedy |
| ■ coincidence | ■ focus | ■ power | ■ transfer |
| ■ complimenting | ■ freedom | ■ racism | ■ translation |
| ■ deport | ■ glitch | ■ reincarnation | ■ unfamiliar |
| ■ detention center | ■ inspired | ■ revolution | ■ vague |
| ■ delicately | ■ Lenape | ■ segregation | ■ Yoruba |
| ■ disconnected | ■ lisp | ■ silhouette | |
| ■ disrespectful | ■ metaphor | ■ suspects | |

Discussion Questions

If the students read the book in small groups or as a whole class, ask discussion questions throughout their reading in order to check comprehension and engage them on a deeper level. Some of these questions can also be used as writing prompts. When students have finished the book, choose from these questions to guide a group discussion:

- What is the book about?
- When you initially meet Haley, the main character and narrator, what do you learn about her? As the book progresses, what else do you find out about her? How does your impression of her change?
- In what ways do the five other characters (Amari, Ashton, Holly, Esteban and Tiago) resonate with you? What did you think about them initially and how does that change over time?
- What kind of classroom are they all in? When Haley reflects, “Even though they didn’t say it, we knew there was something different about us,” what does she mean?
- What is each of the six students’ racial/ethnic identities and how does that impact who they are and their story?
- Why do you think Haley felt a connection to Esteban? What did the two of them share?
- What did you think when Ms. Laverne told the six students that they would spend every Friday afternoon talking with each other, without any teachers or adults in the room?
- How did the students respond and why do you think they responded that way?
- Why is it called the ARTT room?
- Do you think you would like a room in school like that: a place to just to talk without any adults?
- What does Haley mean when she says, “even our brains have rooms?” What does the room symbolize throughout the book? What other symbols are used in the book?
- What happens when Haley and her uncle visit her father in prison, and he doesn’t come down to visit with them? How does Haley feel? How does her uncle respond?
- When Haley starts to record her thoughts on the recorder, what connections does she make to the Lenape people?
- What is a harbor? What does it mean to be a “harbor” for someone? How are the students “harbors” for each other? Is there someone for whom you are a harbor?

- Haley shares this thought with her friends, “My uncle says that when you tell stories, it’s like letting out all the scared inside of it.” What do you think of that statement? Can you relate to this idea? How does the ARTT room do that?
- How do you think the students’ weekly talks help one another?
- How did you feel when you read what each of the students shared? What did you learn about each of them? Did any of their stories resonate with you, and if so, how?
- Do you think it’s helpful to share your feelings and experiences with others? Please explain.
- The idea of freedom comes up often in the book. In what situations does it come up and why? What does freedom mean to you? What does a lack of freedom look and feel like?
- Amari says, “I think what’s really messed up is the way everything changes all quick from one year to the next.” What does it mean? Do you feel like things move fast or slowly? What are some examples from the book and your own life?
- When the students see older kids “necking” (running up to someone and slapping their neck) Ashton, what do they do?
- What are some of the social justice issues that were raised in the book? What did you know about those issues (immigration and deportation, police-involved violence against Black and Latino men) before, and what did you learn?
- What are the different characters’ perspectives on those issues? What is your perspective after reading a novel that explores those issues?
- How did the students respond when Esteban is missing? What impact does his absence have on the group?
- Why does Holly encourage Haley to share her story with the group? How do you think Haley feels as she shares what happened with the accident and her father?
- If you could ask each of the main characters a question, what would you ask?
- Why do you think the book is called *Harbor Me*?
- How did you feel when the book ended? What do you think will happen next?
- What are the overall themes of the book? What message is the author communicating through the story?

Extension Activities

Below are activities that can be done with students in order to extend the learning from the book.

1. Reader’s Response Writing Activities

- **Write a diary entry of a character:** Have students select one of the six main characters (Amari, Ashton, Haley, Holly, Esteban, Tiago) or one of the secondary characters (Haley’s uncle, Holly’s mom, Esteban’s father, Ms. Laverne) from the book. Have students write imagined journal entries for their chosen character, writing 8–10 entries that the character might have written throughout the events in the book. Remind students that for the journal entries, the character’s thoughts, feelings and reflections are very important, as well as their reaction to the day-to-day events that happen to them and other characters. You may choose to have students engage in pre-writing discussions with a partner about their character in order to expand some of their ideas. After they

have completed the assignment, have them share their journal entries with the class and consider creating an online collection of all the journal entries.

- **Write the next chapter of the book:** Have students consider what might happen next in the book and then write an additional chapter of how they think it could continue. Remind students how the book ends by asking the following questions: *What do you think will happen next with Haley and her Dad? What do you think will happen over the summer and the next school year when the six of them are not together any longer? What do you think happens with Esteban and his family? What happens when they meet up in the ARTT room twenty years later?* Instruct students to write the next chapter of the book as they imagine it would continue. The next chapter can be the next day, next month, next school year or twenty years later.
- **Get to know the author:** Have students get to know the author, Jacqueline Woodson. Explain to students that they will conduct research which will culminate in a project. First, as a class, discuss with students what they want to know about the author such as: where she grew up, her inspiration for writing the book, aspects of her identity and their relevance to the book, other books she has written, her interests and hobbies, family life, relevant quotes, etc. Possible sources for their research can include: (1) Woodson's website (www.jacquelinewoodson.com/), (2) her social media posts like Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, (3) interviews she has conducted, (4) articles she has written (such as www.nytimes.com/2019/09/19/magazine/jacqueline-woodson-red-at-the-bone.html) and (5) other online research. The final culmination of their research may include one of the following project ideas: an extended "author bio," contact page, a timeline of her books and their relevance to her life and what's happening in society, a Power Point presentation or a simulated interview between the author and a journalist (one student would play the author and another would play the journalist).

2. What is Freedom?

The concept of freedom is addressed throughout the book. This includes what it means to feel free as well as the absence of freedom. Ask students: *What are some examples in the book where the characters talk about freedom? What does freedom mean to you? What does it mean to be free?* Distribute several post-it notes to each student and have them write on each a word, phrase, concept or feeling associated with the word "freedom." You can share an example such as "the freedom to go to bed when I want" or "the freedom to write a blog post criticizing the Mayor." Have students paste their post-it notes to the board or wall and then organize them into categories, if time allows. Read aloud the words and phrases. Then elicit a definition of **freedom** as follows and record it on the board/smart board:

Freedom is the power, right and ability to act, speak, or think as one wants without hindrance or being controlled.

Engage in a brief discussion by asking a few additional questions such as: *What are some freedoms you already have or enjoy? What are some freedoms you wish you had, but don't? What freedoms do you expect to gain when you're older? In what situations do you not feel free? What are some examples of not being free or losing one's freedom?* Then have students create something that expresses how they feel about freedom or the lack of freedom. It can be a drawing/ illustration, video, poem, short performance, dance, photo(s) or essay. When completed, have students share in small groups or with the whole class.

3. Social Justice Issues and Activism

Several issues of injustice are addressed in the book through one or more of the main characters. One is the issue of police-involved violence of Black and Latino men and boys, including the mention of Tamir Rice, the 12-year-old African-American boy in Cleveland, OH who was shot by a police officer while playing with a toy gun. The other issue addressed is immigration, being undocumented and deportation. You can use some of the lesson plans below to explore those issues in more depth. You can also talk with students briefly about those issues and ask them to brainstorm other issues of social justice they are concerned about. After they have brainstormed a list of social justice issues they care about, engage them in a process where they learn more about the issue and then identify ways to get involved in activism in order to address the issue, using the [10 Ways Youth Can Engage in Activism](#) resource. Explain to students that activism provides an opportunity for people to get involved in different kinds of activities to work on changing something they think is unfair or unjust. Allow students to form small teams to design a plan to actively address the issue that is most important to them, and share their plans with the rest of the class.

ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and educational resources on identity, immigration, race and racism.

Curriculum Resources

Black Lives Matter: From Hashtag to Movement, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/black-lives-matter-from-hashtag-to-movement

Experiences with Race and Racism, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/experiences-with-race-and-racism

Social Justice Poetry, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/social-justice-poetry

Who Am I? Identity Poems, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/who-am-i-identity-poems

When Perception and Reality Collide: Implicit Bias and Race, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/when-perception-and-reality-collide-implicit-bias-race

Why Are Families Being Separated and Detained at the Border?, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/why-are-families-being-separated-and-detained-at-the

Websites

10 Ways Youth Can Engage in Activism

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/10-ways-youth-can-engage-in-activism

A list of ideas for bringing social activism into the classroom and outside of the school walls. These strategies can be acted upon individually, organized together as a group and young people can join with a larger effort that is taking place locally or nationally.

Education Resources on Immigration, Immigrants and Anti-Immigrant Bias

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/education-resources-on-immigration-immigrants-and-anti

A collection of education resources for educators, parents and families on immigration, immigrants and anti-immigrant bias.

Race Talk: Engaging Young People in Conversations about Race and Racism

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/race-talk-engaging-young-people-in-conversations-about

As a society, public conversations about race and racism have increased in volume and intensity. Here are some suggestions and strategies for having classroom conversations with young people about these issues.

Safe and Inclusive Schools for All

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/safe-and-inclusive-schools-for-all

This resource provides information about how to promote a safe, respectful and inclusive school community.

Teaching about Racism, Violence, Inequity and the Criminal Justice System

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/teaching-about-racism-violence-inequity-and-the-criminal

Anti-bias resources and strategies to help you discuss with your youth incidents of police officers involved in the deaths of African-American and Latino males and a biased justice system.

Children's Books

Below are links to lists of recommended anti-bias and multicultural books for the indicated category.

Bias, Discrimination & Hate: Anti-Immigrant, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid\[178\]=178](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid[178]=178)

People, Identity & Culture, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?childrens-lit-select-all-7=1&tid\[201\]=201&tid\[202\]=202&tid\[203\]=203&tid\[204\]=204&tid\[205\]=205&tid\[206\]=206&tid\[207\]=207&tid\[208\]=208&tid\[209\]=209&tid\[210\]=210&tid\[211\]=211&tid\[212\]=212&tid\[213\]=213&tid\[214\]=214&tid\[215\]=215](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?childrens-lit-select-all-7=1&tid[201]=201&tid[202]=202&tid[203]=203&tid[204]=204&tid[205]=205&tid[206]=206&tid[207]=207&tid[208]=208&tid[209]=209&tid[210]=210&tid[211]=211&tid[212]=212&tid[213]=213&tid[214]=214&tid[215]=215)

Race & Racism, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?childrens-lit-select-all-8=1&tid\[217\]=217&tid\[218\]=218&tid\[219\]=219&tid\[220\]=220&tid\[221\]=221](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?childrens-lit-select-all-8=1&tid[217]=217&tid[218]=218&tid[219]=219&tid[220]=220&tid[221]=221)