

This guide was prepared using the Penguin edition, ©2003. Other editions may differ.

[Note: The novel is told in a series of poems.]

## Synopsis

Eleven-year-old Lonnie Collins Motion, called Lonnie, lost his parents in a fire four years ago. He was separated from his beloved little sister Lili, who has been adopted. None of this is revealed until later in the book. Lonnie is in foster care. Lonnie expresses his feelings in his fifth-grade poetry-writing class, encouraged by his wonderful teacher, Ms. Marcus. In sixty free-verse poems and more formal verse, such as haiku and sonnets, Lonnie writes about his life and about the writing that "makes me remember."

When the story opens, Lonnie explains that his foster mother Miss Edna wants him to settle down because he is so active. He says: "It's Miss Edna's over and over/Be quiet!" He is writing his story in poems because he has difficulty holding onto ideas. He has taken Ms. Marcus' suggestion to "Write it down before it leaves your brain."

Lonnie recalls when he was younger, he was holding his baby sister Lili on his lap. His mother kindly cautions him not to drop her. She reassured him that he was once her baby and still is. In the next poem, Lonnie explains that "the missing gets really bad," but we do not yet know what he is missing. Lonnie is acutely aware that he is black and very poor. Before he was taken in by Miss Edna, Lonnie lived in a group home. The rules were strict and Lonnie realized that he had become what he calls a "Throwaway Boy," unloved and unwanted. At Halloween, he wishes for a big brother to protect him, even though he is in the fifth grade.

Gradually Lonnie reveals that at age seven, his parents died in a fire, leaving him and his younger sister, Lili, orphaned. His father had worked for Con Edison; his mother was a receptionist. He and his sister were sleeping over a friend's house that fateful day.

Lonnie recalls how he and his mother used to dance the "Locomotion." Lonnie recalls how astonished he was in church to hear his classmate Eric sing so beautifully. He realizes that all his classmates have special talents. Clyde, a new boy, is mocked for his "country clothes" and poverty. On the fourth anniversary of his parents' death, Lonnie wakes up sick, as he always does on this day. Miss Edna treats him with great kindness.

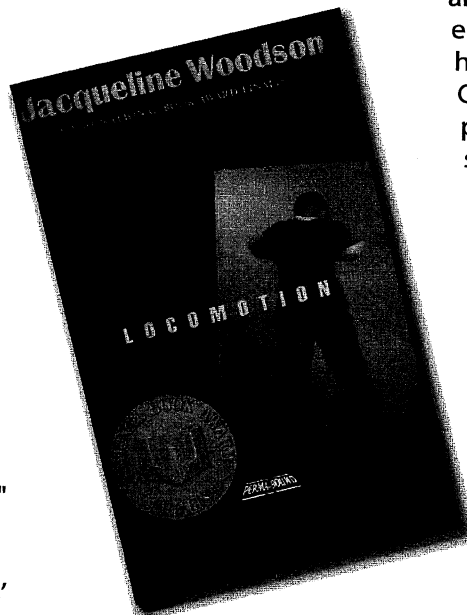
Lonnie admires his neighbor Todd, for the pleasure he gets from raising pigeons. When Miss Edna gets her paycheck, she treats Lonnie to Twinkies. The clerk thinks that Lonnie is Miss Edna's own son. Miss Edna has already raised two sons, Rodney and Jenkins.

Lili was adopted, yet Lonnie figures out a way to visit her regularly. Lili is eight years old and

Lonnie loves her very much. Lili believes that she and Lonnie will be reunited through faith.

Ms. Marcus wants the kids to write an occasional poem, a poem about an important occasion. The kids are unable to think of anything important that has happened in their lives that deserves recognition. Ms. Marcus gets sad when she realizes how difficult her students' lives are. Lonnie likes his classmate LeTenya and she likes him.

Eric is hospitalized because of his severe sickle cell anemia. Lonnie and his classmates are very sad about Eric's illness. Lamont and the rest of the kids resent their severe poverty and the gulf between the "haves" and the "have-nots."



Lonnie returns home to find Miss Edna dancing with joy because Rodney is coming home from upstate. Lonnie visits Lili in her beautiful new home and is determined that one day they will be able to live together as a family. Ms. Marcus is named teacher of the year. Some of the kids read their poems for the reporter. Meanwhile, Rodney treats Lonnie like his younger brother, to Lonnie's great delight. Rodney even calls Lonnie "Little Brother." Ms. Marcus says that Lonnie has a "poet's heart."

Lonnie and Lili are thrilled to be spending two weeks together in Camp Kaufman, in upstate New York. Lonnie has finally finished reading the Bible that Lili gave him. She feels that God is rewarding them with the two weeks together because of Lonnie's accomplishment.

### Timeline of Fire

- 300 million years ago** The atmosphere is so rich in oxygen (30%), that fires would not stop.
- 200 million years ago** Earth's oxygen levels dropped to about 21 percent of today's atmosphere.
- 15 to 5 million years ago** Grassland communities developed with fire a key element. Leads to new forms of life including the large grazing animals and humans.
- 12000 BC-1900 AD** Glaciers retreat. Human-set and lightning-set fires increase.
- 1800s** Immigrants to America learn planned burning of land from the Native Americans.
- 1907** At Yale, H. H. Chapman champions prescribed burning.
- 1910** Idaho and Montana: millions of acres of natural forests burn in the "Big Blowup." 78 dead.
- 1916** U.S. National Park Service established; adopts strict fire suppression policy.
- 1921** U.S. Forest Service standardizes policy of intensive fire suppression.

- 1943** Forest Service Chief Lyle Watts encourages experimental use of prescribed burning.
- 1945** First *Smokey the Bear* ads.
- 1952** Ed Komarek of Tall Timbers Research Station in Florida advocates prescribed fire worldwide.
- 1962** The book *Fire and Water* shows that productivity in southern pine forests is increased by periodic controlled burning.
- 1965** Biswell's studies show that giant sequoias depend on fire to kill seedlings of competing tree species.
- 1968** National Park Service publishes new policies recognizing fire as a natural phenomenon.
- 1969** Forest Service admits some fire is good.
- 1974** Illinois begins controlled burns.
- 1986** Indiana incorporates prescribed fire as part of its land management program.
- 1988** One-third of Yellowstone's 2.2 million acres scorched by 248 wildfires that are at first allowed to burn.
- 1996** A study in *Science* reports that the suppression of wildfires led to the loss of a third of the plant species in Wisconsin prairies over the past 50 years.

## Author Sketch

Jacqueline Woodson was born in 1964, in Columbus, Ohio, but during her adolescent years, she moved back and forth between South Carolina and New York City, and "never quite felt a part of either place," according to a *Ms.*

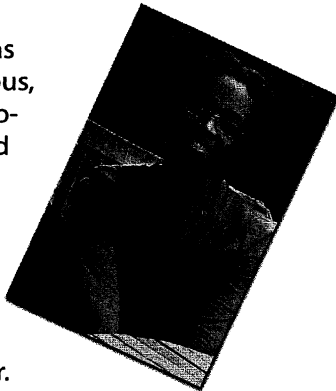
article by Diane R. Paylor.

From her childhood, Woodson felt drawn to a career as a writer. In elementary school, she was the literary editor of her school's magazine. "I used to write on everything," she commented for a Bantam Doubleday Dell Web site. "It was the thing I liked to do the most. I never thought I could have a career as a writer—I always thought it was something I would have to do on the side."

Woodson's seventh-grade teacher convinced her that she should pursue whatever career she felt would make her happiest. Woodson decided to follow the advice and write about communities that were familiar to her. She noted in an interview: "I wanted to write about communities of color. I wanted to write about girls. I wanted to write about friendship and all of these things that I felt like were missing in a lot of the books that I read as a child." Woodson earned her BA from Adelphi University on Long Island, New York, in 1985.

After a brief career teaching at various colleges including Eugene Lang College and Vermont College, Woodson turned to a career as a writer. She has been a freelance writer since 1997. She makes her home in Brooklyn, New York.

"I feel compelled to write against stereotypes," Woodson further remarked, "hoping people will see that some issues know no color, class, sexuality." In her *Horn Book* article, Woodson grouped her books into two categories: her "good" books, which deal with relationships between family members and friends, and her more controversial books, which skirt the delicate problem of what is "appropriate" for children to read.



## Critic's Corner

Woodson was awarded MacDowell Colony fellowships, 1990 and 1994, and at the Fine Arts Work Center, Provincetown, MA, 1991-92. She received the Kenyon Review Award for literary excellence in fiction, 1992 and 1995. The following year, *Granta* named her to their Fifty Best American Authors under 40 list. She was a *Boston Globe-Horn Book* Award nominee in fiction and poetry category in 2003 for *Locomotion*. Reviews for *Locomotion* were excellent.

*Publishers Weekly* noted: "Woodson creates a contagious appreciation for poetry while using the genre as a cathartic means for expressing the young poet's own grief." *School Library Journal* praised the book this way: "In a masterful use of voice, Woodson allows Lonnie's poems to tell a complex story of loss and grief and to create a gritty, urban environment. Despite the spare text, Lonnie's foster mother and the other minor characters are three-dimensional, making the boy's world a convincingly real one. His reflections touch on poverty and on being African American when whites seem to have the material advantages, and return repeatedly to the pain of living apart from his younger sister."

Hazel Rochman, writing in *Booklist*, said: "From rap to haiku, Woodson shows and tells that poetry is about who we are."

*Kirkus* called *Locomotion* a "searing and gritty story... Woodson composes a plot without easy answers.... Jacqueline Woodson's poignant story of love, loss, and hope is lyrically written and enormously accessible."

## Other Books by the Author

*Martin Luther King, Jr. and His Birthday* (1990)  
*Last Summer with Maizon* (1990)  
*Maizon at Blue Hill* (1992)  
*Between Madison and Palmetto* (1993)  
*Book Chase* (1994)  
*I Hadn't Meant to Tell You This* (1994)  
*From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun* (1995)  
*We Had a Picnic This Sunday Past* (1997)  
*The House You Pass on the Way* (1997)  
*If You Come Softly* (1998)

*Lena* (1998)  
*Miracle's Boys* (2000)  
*Sweet, Sweet Memory* (2000)  
*The Other Side* (2001)  
*Our Gracie Aunt* (2002)  
*Visiting Day* (2002)  
*Hush* (2002)  
*Behind You* (2004)  
*Coming on Home Soon* (2004)  
*The Dear One* (2004)

## Bibliography

*Authors and Artists for Young Adults*, Volume 21, Gale (Detroit, MI), 1997.  
*Children's Literature Review*, Volume 49, Gale (Detroit, MI), 1998.  
*Horn Book*, Jennifer M. Brabander, review of *Locomotion*, pp. 219-220.  
*Kirkus*, November 15, 2002, review of *Locomotion*, p. 1704.  
*Ms.*, November-December, 1994, Diane R. Paylor, "Bold Type: Jacqueline Woodson's 'Girl Stories,'" p. 77; July, 1995, p. 75.  
*Publishers Weekly*, November 25, 2002, review of *Locomotion*, pp. 68-69.  
*St. James Guide to Young Adult Writers*, 2nd edition, St. James Press (Detroit, MI), 1999.  
*Twentieth-Century Children's Writers*, 4th edition, St. James Press (Detroit, MI), 1995.  
*Writers for Young Adults*, Scribner (New York, NY), 2000.

## General Objectives

1. To analyze poetry
2. To understand the novel's title
3. To recognize the importance of love
4. To assess each character's personality
5. To recognize the novel's theme and lessons that it teaches
6. To understand foster care
7. To explore the ways kindness can be shown
8. To find examples of bravery and courage
9. To sympathize with the main character's plight
10. To trace the chronology of events

## Specific Objectives

1. To define poetry and understand how it uses concise language and figures of speech to express emotion
2. To learn about haiku, occasional poems, sonnets, lyrics, and other poetic forms
3. To probe Lonnie's love for his parents and pain at their death
4. To understand why Lonnie wants to be reunited with Lili
5. To sympathize with Lonnie's grief and sorrow
6. To appreciate how kindly Miss Edna treats Lonnie
7. To locate the flashbacks
8. To appreciate Miss Marcus's fine teaching
9. To analyze how Lonnie's name fits his character traits
10. To find examples of Lonnie's courage and determination

## Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Jacqueline Woodson's style, present the following terms and applications to the novel:

**poetry** a type of literature in which words are selected for their beauty, sound, and power to express feelings. Traditionally, poems had a specific rhythm and rhyme, but such modern poetry as free verse does not have regular beat, rhyme, or line length. Most poems are written in lines, which are arranged together in groups called stanzas. *Locomotion* is written in a series of 60 poems of all different sorts, including sonnets, haiku, and lyrics.

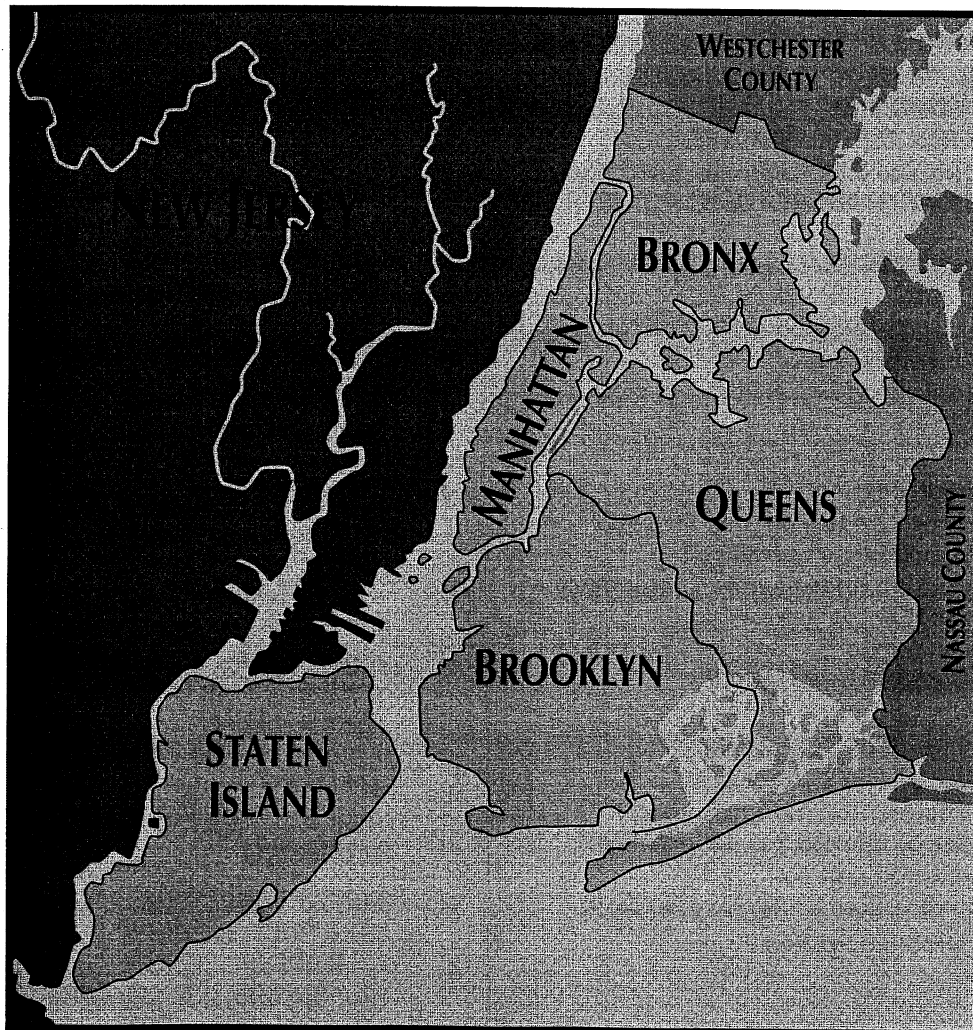
**figurative language** words and expressions not meant to be taken literally. Figurative language uses words in fresh, new ways to appeal to the imagination. Figures of speech include similes, metaphors, extended metaphors, hyperbole, and personification. Since *Locomotion* is told in poetry, it uses a great deal of figurative language. On page 1, for instance, we have this simile: "the ideas in my/ head go out like a candle." Personification is used in the poem on page 6: "And outside the sun/ getting bright and warm suddenly/ like it'd been listening in." Here, Woodson is giving human characteristics to the sun, an inanimate object.

**flashback** a scene that breaks into the story to show an earlier part of the action. Flashbacks help fill in missing information, explain the characters' actions, and advance the plot. Woodson uses flashbacks to unfold the story of the death of Lonnie's parents.

## The Importance of Setting

Readers can infer from details in the story that *Locomotion* is set in an urban ghetto in New York. The newspaper man who comes to report on Miss Marcus being named "Teacher of the Year" lauds her for teaching the "inner-city and undeserved" students. The most important aspect of the setting is its poverty, as described most poignantly in the poem entitled "Lamont."

In this poem, Lamont comes in angry one Wednesday. He mutters, "No black guys be writing poetry anyway," in response to the start of class. Ms. Marcus tries to jolly him into a better mood by talking about the black poet Langston Hughes. Angel asks, "He make a lot of money?" Ms. Marcus explains that he wrote because he loved it, for the sheer joy of expressing himself in poetry. She says doing what you like is what really matters in life. "Not if you broke," Angel says sagely. Ms. Marcus questions the class about poor people not being happy. Angel says: "...when you see those pictures on TV of those kids who/they want you to send money to,/they don't look happy to me./They just look hungry and sad." Taken aback by the classes' frank assessment of their misery, Ms. Marcus can do nothing but stare down at her hands. She knows that poetry does not fill an empty belly.



## Cross-Curricular Sources

### Fiction

William Armstrong, *Souder*  
Sharon Draper, *Tears of a Tiger*  
Sharon Draper, *Forged By Fire*  
Christopher Paul Curtis, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*  
Christopher Paul Curtis, *Bud, Not Buddy*  
Sharon G. Flake, *The Skin I'm In*  
Jack Ezra Keats, *The Snowy Day*  
Robert Lipsyte, *The Contender*  
William Dean Myers, *Me, Mop, and the Moondance Kid*  
Jeanette Winter, *Follow the Drinking Gourd*  
Jacqueline Woodson, *Coming on Home Soon*

### Nonfiction

Chrisanne Beckner, *100 African-Americans Who Shaped History*  
Louis Haber, *Black Pioneers of Science and Invention*  
Barack Obama, *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*  
Cal Massey, *Famous African-American Women*  
Diane Patrick, *The New York Public Library Amazing African-American History: A Book of Answers for Kids*  
Nancy I. Sanders, *A Kid's Guide to African-American History*  
Jeffrey Stewart, *1001 Things Kids Should Know About African-American History*  
Otha Richard Sullivan, *African-American Inventors*

### DVDs, Videos

*African Americans* (1993)  
*Harlem Renaissance: Fats Waller, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Nat King Cole* (DVD)  
*A Legacy of Patriotism and Valor: African-Americans in WW II* (1998)  
*Lullaby of Harlem* (DVD)  
*Story of a People: Black Youth* (1998)

### Internet

Official Jacqueline Woodson Web site  
<http://www.jacquelinewoodson.com/>  
Jacqueline Woodson, Bantam Doubleday Dell  
<http://www.bdd.com/>  
BookPage Heidi Henneman, "Poetry in Motion."  
<http://www.bookpage.com/>

## Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Jacqueline Woodson's *Locomotion* should include these aspects:

### Themes

- death
- education
- family
- fire
- kindness
- love
- poetry
- poverty
- sensory descriptions
- sickle cell anemia

### Motifs

- losing your parents in a tragedy
- being an unwanted child
- dealing with the foster care system
- coping with a chronic and debilitating illness
- expressing yourself through poetry
- having friends
- trusting to a higher power
- being reunited with a sibling
- dealing with poverty
- obtaining an education

## Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in the novel. Explain the meaning of each. Page numbers indicate the context from which the item is taken.

1. *Was I ever your baby, Mama?/ and Mama looked at me all warm and smiley,/You still are, she said.* (p. 5-6)  
(Woodson uses italics rather than quotation marks to show dialogue, which may confuse students initially. From the first poem, readers can see that Lonnie was a beloved child in a warmly affectionate family. This makes the loss of his parents even more tragic, for he understands the joy that comes from real family love and caring.)
2. Maybe it's that if you're white you can't see all the whiteness around you. (p. 13)  
(Lonnie and his classmates are acutely aware that they are poor and members of a minority.)

*Lonnie notes that he and his friends learn about class and racial differences from television, where they see affluent white people with ample food and luxury goods. He contrasts this picture to the poverty of Miss Edna's house. He is not aware that much of what is shown on television is grossly exaggerated, yet he feels the sting of being deprived.)*

3. *I guess your son likes Twinkies, huh?/ And Miss Edna looks at me sideways./Then she smiles and says/ Yeah, I guess he does. (p. 37)*  
*(The clerk at the grocery store assumes that Miss Edna is Lonnie's mother because of the kind way she treats him. In this instance, she buys three boxes of Twinkies for the two of them to share. From this, readers can infer that Miss Edna is doing her best to raise Lonnie with love, as she did her own two sons.)*
4. *An hour. That's plenty of time. (p. 44)*  
*(The social worker gives Lonnie and Lili an hour together, which she feels is plenty of time. Lonnie is being highly ironic here, because he wants a lifetime with his sister, not a mere hour. She feels the same as he does; the two want nothing more than to be reunited and to live under the same roof.)*
5. *Lili's new mama didn't want no boys/Just a sweet little girl. (p. 46)*  
*(We learn here why Lili was adopted but Lonnie was not; Lili's new mother did not want a boy. No one told Lonnie that he was unwanted because of his gender, but he knows that not a lot of people want boys that aren't babies. Miss Edna took him in because she had already raised two boys and thus feels that she knows more about boys than she does about girls. She might also have seen the need in Lonnie's eyes and his innate sweetness.)*
6. *I want to say, I found God, Lili/ And throw up my hands./And grin like somebody's big old fool. (p. 61)*  
*(Lonnie hopes that faith and spirituality will be sufficient to reunite them, since nothing else has worked. He is certainly willing to give it a try.)*
7. *And for a long, long time just stares/ down at her hands. (p. 69)*  
*(Ms. Marcus is devastated to realize how deeply her students have been affected by their poverty. The realization strikes her so hard that she is unable to respond, much less teach.)*

8. *My little baby boy/not even two months old and already/a survivor. (p. 74)*  
*(In a flashback, Lonnie remembers his mother telling him that he had been a premature baby, not even four pounds. For weeks, she and her husband worried that he might not survive. Lonnie did rally, however, which shows that he is strong. Lonnie draws on that memory now for reassurance.)*
9. *Little Brother, he called me./ Little Brother Lonnie. (p. 83)*  
*(Lonnie is thrilled when Miss Edna's son Rodney not only treats him like a brother but also calls him "little brother." Lonnie feels so happy about Rodney's kindness because Lonnie very much wants a family of his own once again.)*
10. *You have a poet's heart, Lonnie. (p. 87)*  
*(Ms. Marcus recognizes that Lonnie is unusually observant and sensitive, aware of his surroundings. This can be a strength and a weakness, because it enables him to look more deeply at his world but also makes him experience pain far more sharply.)*

## Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

### Questions 1-5 (Literal Level)

1. How is the form of this novel unusual?  
*(The entire story is told in verse, a series of sixty poems.)*
2. How did Lonnie get his name?  
*(Mama told him that she named him after the song "Locomotion," using letters like this: Lo(nnie) Co(llins) Motion.)*
3. What happened to Lonnie's parents?  
*(They were killed in a fire. Lonnie and his sister Lili were not at home at the time; they were sleeping at Pastor Marshall's house in preparation for a trip the next day to the Bronx Zoo.)*
4. How does Lonnie feel about his sister? How does she feel about him?  
*(Lonnie and Lili love each other very much. They want nothing more than to be able to live together once again as a family.)*

5. Describe Lonnie's life with Miss Edna. (*Miss Edna, Lonnie's foster mother, is often bothered by the commotion he makes. She tries over and over to calm him down and has quenched part of his spirit. Yet she loves him and treats him as she does her own beloved sons Rodney and Jenkins.*)

**Questions 6-8 (Interpretative Level)**

6. What qualities make Lonnie an appealing character? (*Lonnie is kind and loving, as shown by the way he treats his sister, his classmates, and Miss Edna. He is smart, too, shown by his school achievement. Perhaps most of all, he is sensitive, as shown by his poems.*)
7. How do the children change as a result of having written so many poems? (*They become more aware of themselves and their surroundings. They are able to express their feelings, goals, and dreams more clearly, too.*)
8. Ms. Marcus says that Lonnie has a "poet's heart." What does she mean by that? (*She means that he is sensitive and easily affected by events around him. She also means that he is keenly observant and open to new experiences.*)

**Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)**

9. What did you learn about poetry from this novel? (*Students learned a great deal about the different forms that poems can take, such as haiku, sonnets, occasional poems, and lyrics. They also learned about figurative language and imagery. They learned to write concisely and directly.*)
10. What role does religion play in this novel? (*Lili has adopted formal religion as a result of her life with her very religious adoptive mother Selma. As a result, she believes in the power of religion to improve her life and make her wishes come true. Lonnie shares her deep faith but it is not as closely tied to a specific set of beliefs.*)

**Questions 11-12 (Creative Level)**

11. Write a journal that describes Lonnie's life ten years in the future.
12. Write a poem that Lili might send to Lonnie in which she shares her feelings for him.

**Across the Curriculum**

**Speech**

1. Ms. Marcus wants to know why Lonnie noted the race of a character in a poem that he wrote. Explain in a speech what qualities most help to define a person.
2. Give a speech to explain why Lonnie deserves to be adopted by Miss Edna or another good family.
3. Lonnie watches the first-graders get ready for Halloween. With some classmates, debate whether or not children should be allowed to trick or treat at Halloween.
4. Lonnie writes about the Mets. Make up a cheer for your favorite team. Share it with a group of classmates.
5. Hold a panel discussion in which you brainstorm some ways to reduce world poverty.

**Art/Music**

1. Dance to "The Locomotion," as Lonnie and his mother used to do.
2. Lonnie thinks about exotic places, including Tahiti, Puerto Rico, Spain, and Australia. Choose one of these destinations and create a travel brochure for it. Include pictures and words. Make your readers want to visit this far-away place!
3. "Hip Hop Rules the World," Lamont says. Write a hip hop song and perform it for the class.
4. Make a get well card for Eric, who has been hospitalized with sickle cell anemia.
5. Ms. Marcus is named teacher of the year. Choose a teacher whom you think deserves this award. Make a certificate. Explain why the teacher is so special.

**Language Arts**

1. Define poetry. Include at least three examples that support your definition.
2. Bring in three of your favorite poems. Read them to a small group of classmates. Talk about why you like them so much.
3. Imagine that you are Lonnie. Write another poem that could fit into this book. Express your feelings on a topic that is important to you.
4. Rewrite any one poem as prose (non-poetry). Compare and contrast the two versions. Which do you prefer and why?



5. Lonnie learns about the African-American poet Langston Hughes. Read one of Hughes' poems and write a review of it. Tell what parts you liked the best.
6. Miss Edna comforts Lonnie this way: "The last time Miss Edna came home and found me/ crying She said *Think/ about all the stuff you love, Lonnie.*" List six people or things that you love. Write a sentence for each one, telling why you love it.

#### History/Social Studies

1. Lonnie becomes a foster child. Research the foster care system in your state. For example, how does someone become a foster parent? If possible, invite a representative from the foster care agency to speak to your class.
2. Lonnie has to follow the rules in the Group Home. Write 10 classroom rules and explain why each is important.
3. Give the history of Halloween.
4. Report on the Harlem Renaissance, the great outpouring of music, art, and literature in Harlem, NY, in the 1920s and 1930s.
5. Lonnie learns that "'sonnet' comes from 'sonnetto' and that sonnetto means little song or sound/ It reminds me of that guy's name Gepetto/ the one who made *Pinocchio* from wood he found." Explain who *Pinocchio* and Gepetto were.

#### Science

1. Lonnie's parents die in a house fire. Make a fire safety prevention plan for your family and home.
2. Explain the correct way to hold a baby. Using a doll, demonstrate it for the class.
3. Draw a honeysuckle flower, the symbol of Lonnie's mother in this novel. Label the different parts and write a caption telling about the flower.
4. Lonnie makes a wish on a firefly. Find out what makes fireflies glow. Then make a wish on one!

#### Math

1. Create a chart or graph showing the number of children who live in group homes in your state.
2. Find out how much damage is caused by fires every year. Express the amount in dollars.

### Alternate Assessment

1. Using scenes from the novel, create a comic book that shows its key events.
2. Working with a small group, role-play the scene in which the reporter interviews the class when Ms. Marcus receives her award.
3. In your own words, state the novel's theme or message.
4. Write a critical review of the novel for the school newspaper.

## Vocabulary Test

Match each word to its meaning. Write the letter of your choice in the space provided.

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| ___ 1. honeysuckle | A. group of singers                         |
| ___ 2. preacher    | B. 17-syllable poem                         |
| ___ 3. corny       | C. a type of flower                         |
| ___ 4. collards    | D. catching, infectious                     |
| ___ 5. zigzag      | E. dull, foolish                            |
| ___ 6. haiku       | F. type of nut                              |
| ___ 7. sonnet      | G. minister                                 |
| ___ 8. pecans      | H. 14-line poem with a set rhyme and rhythm |
| ___ 9. choir       | I. crooked                                  |
| ___ 10. contagious | J. leafy green vegetable                    |

## Comprehension Test A

### Part I: Motivation (20 points)

Complete each phrase below with a reason or justification.

1. Lonnie moves in with Miss Edna because
2. Miss Edna always asks Lonnie to settle down because
3. Lonnie writes about his life because
4. Lili and Lonnie have been separated because
5. The class cannot write occasional poems because
6. Ms. Marcus gets sad sometimes because
7. Lamont is angry much of the time because
8. Eric is hospitalized because
9. One day Lonnie returns home to find Miss Edna dancing with joy because
10. Ms. Marcus is honored for

### Part II: Matching (20 points)

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name from the list that follows. Place the letter of your answer in the blank provided at left.

- |  |              |                       |
|--|--------------|-----------------------|
| ___ 1. Mother of Rodney and Jenkins  |              |                       |
| ___ 2. Lonnie's classmate  | A. Lonnie    | F. LaTenya            |
| ___ 3. Lili's adoptive mother  | B. Miss Edna | G. Selma              |
| ___ 4. Miss Edna's birth son   | C. Clyde     | H. Lili               |
| ___ 5. Miss Edna's foster son  | D. Todd      | I. Jacqueline Woodson |
| ___ 6. The author of <i>Locomotion</i>   | E. Rodney    | J. Lamont             |
| ___ 7. Lonnie's younger sister   |              |                       |
| ___ 8. The young man who keeps pigeons on the roof                               |              |                       |
| ___ 9. The classmate Lonnie has a crush on                                       |              |                       |
| ___ 10. The new boy in class who is mocked for his poverty and "country" clothes |              |                       |

## Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

### Part III: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements T if they are true or F if they are false.

- 1. When the story opens, Lonnie Collins Motion is five years old.
- 2. Lonnie lives with Miss Edna in a white suburb in New York.
- 3. Because he has difficulty holding onto ideas, Lonnie writes his story in poems.
- 4. Lonnie had once lived in a group home.
- 5. Lamont calls himself a "Throwaway Boy," unloved and unwanted.
- 6. Lonnie's mother always smelled of sweet honeysuckle powder.
- 7. Mr. Collins had worked for Con Edison; Mrs. Collins was a receptionist.
- 8. Lonnie refuses to go trick-or-treating on Halloween without his sister.
- 9. Once, Lonnie dropped his baby sister and his mother never trusted him again.
- 10. At church, Lonnie is surprised to hear his classmate Eric sing so beautifully.

### Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences on the essay response page.

- 1. Describe Lonnie's character. Decide whether or not you would like to have him as friend. Tell why.
- 2. Explain what you learned about poetry from this book.
- 3. Write a poem that describes your character.
- 4. Compare and contrast Lonnie's life before and after the fire. Explain how they are similar and different from each other.

## Comprehension Test B

### Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

Choose the best term or phrase to complete each of the following statements. Circle your answers.

1. Eleven-year-old Lonnie Collins Motion, called Lonnie, lost his parents in a **(fire, murder)**.
2. When the story opens, this tragedy had taken place **(ten, four)** years ago.
3. Now, Lonnie is in **(a group home, foster care)**.
4. Lonnie realizes that he had become what he calls a **("Reject," "Throwaway Boy,")** unloved and alone.
5. Lonnie's father had worked for **(the State Department, Con Edison)**.
6. Because of his size at birth, Lonnie's mother had compared him to a **(chicken, pig)**.
7. Eric sings beautifully **(in school, at church)**.
8. When she gets her paycheck, Miss Edna buys Lonnie **(Twinkies, video games)** as a special treat.
9. Eric is hospitalized because of his severe **(arthritis, sickle cell anemia)**.
10. Rodney calls Lonnie **("a Royal Pain," "Little Brother.")**

### Part II: Matching (20 points)

Match the following descriptions with names of speakers from the list below. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- |  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| ___ 1. Lonnie's classmates                     | A. Miss Edna          |
| ___ 2. Lili's adoptive mother                  | B. Rodney and Jenkins |
| ___ 3. Author of <i>Locomotion</i>             | C. Lamont and Eric    |
| ___ 4. The classmate Lonnie has a crush on     | D. Todd               |
| ___ 5. The neighbor who raises pigeons         | E. Clyde              |
| ___ 6. Lonnie's foster mother                  | F. Lonnie             |
| ___ 7. The young man whose parents die         | G. Selma              |
| ___ 8. Lonnie's younger sister                 | H. LaTenya            |
| ___ 9. Miss Edna's sons                        | I. Lili               |
| ___ 10. The new student mocked for his poverty | J. Jacqueline Woodson |

## Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

**Part III: Identification (20 points)**

Briefly describe each and explain why it is important in the story.

1. fire
2. honeysuckle talc powder
3. poetry
4. sickle cell anemia
5. the "Locomotion"

**Part IV: Essay (40 points)**

Choose two and answer in complete sentences on the essay response page.

1. Describe how Lonnie's parents died and what has happened in his life since then.
2. Analyze what the title means and tell why it fits the novel's theme.
3. Ms. Marcus wants the kids to write an occasional poem, a poem about something important. Write an occasional poem about a big, important event in your life.
4. Compare and contrast Miss Edna and Ms. Marcus. Tell how they are the same and different.



## Answer Key

### Vocabulary Test

1. C    2. G    3. E    4. J    5. I  
6. B    7. H    8. F    9. A    10. D

## Comprehension Test A

### Part I: Motivation (20 points)

1. his parents died in a fire and Miss Edna takes him in as a foster child
2. he is so active, as his name suggests
3. it helps him remember important events in his life
4. no one was willing to take both of them in
5. they cannot think of any good occasions to describe
6. she realizes that her students have very difficult lives and she cannot do much to help them
7. he resents being poor and black
8. he suffers from sickle-cell anemia and has a very painful and dangerous attack
9. Rodney is coming home from upstate
10. being an excellent teacher

### Part II: Matching (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. B | 6. I  |
| 2. J | 7. H  |
| 3. G | 8. D  |
| 4. E | 9. F  |
| 5. A | 10. C |

### Part III: True/False (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. T  |
| 2. F | 7. T  |
| 3. T | 8. F  |
| 4. T | 9. F  |
| 5. F | 10. T |

### Part IV: Essay (40 Points)

Answers will vary.

## Comprehension Test B

### Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

- |                    |                       |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. fire            | 6. chicken            |
| 2. four            | 7. at church          |
| 3. foster care     | 8. Twinkies           |
| 4. "Throwaway Boy" | 9. sickle cell anemia |
| 5. Con Edison      | 10. "Little Brother"  |

### Part II: Matching (20 points)

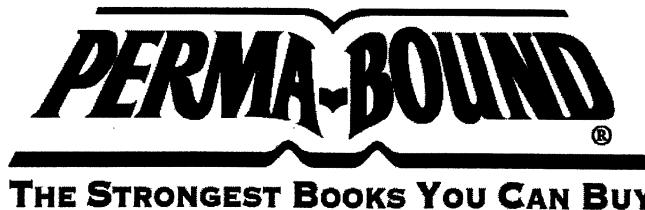
- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. C | 6. A  |
| 2. G | 7. F  |
| 3. J | 8. I  |
| 4. H | 9. B  |
| 5. D | 10. E |

### Part III: Identification (20 points)

1. Fire is what kills Lonnie's parents. Thus, it functions as a fearful symbol of destruction and loss.
2. Lonnie's mother wore honeysuckle talc powder, so he associates it with her. He goes into stores to smell the powder to evoke her presence.
3. The story is told in poetry and the students express their personalities, loves, and losses in verse.
4. Eric suffers from sickle cell anemia, a painful and debilitating genetic disease. It represents one more burden of the black community.
5. Lonnie's mother danced the "Locomotion" with him when she was alive. It symbolizes happiness and family unity.

### Part IV: Essay (40 Points)

Answers will vary.



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