



Yale-New Haven  
Teachers Institute®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2021 Volume I: The Social Struggles of Contemporary Black Art

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## Historical Allusions and Art in Jacqueline Woodson's *Brown Girl Dreaming*

Guide for Curriculum Unit 21.01.09  
by Eden C. Stein

This unit revolves around the award-winning memoir in verse, *Brown Girl Dreaming*, by Jacqueline Woodson. Supplementary texts, including fiction and nonfiction poetry, picture books and articles by and about Woodson and the topics alluded to in her memoir, including brief biographies of figures from the Civil Rights Movement and primary sources, are also studied alongside the memoir. The unit explores analysis of visual art such as photographs from the era (1960s and 1970s) and works depicting black youth as well as the settings she writes about (Ohio; Greenville, South Carolina; and Brooklyn). Music that Jacqueline Woodson mentions in her memoir, along with additional songs from the Civil Rights Movement, can be listened to, analyzed, and responded to. Connections are drawn with the Black Lives Matter movement as well as students own cultural and personal identities. In addition to responding to the various texts, students will have an opportunity to engage in creative writing. To engage in the theme of identity, students write their own brief memoirs in verse, as well as creating works of art. This unit was designed for seventh grade students at a small, highly diverse middle school, but could be taught to a grade higher or lower.

(Developed for English Language Arts, grade 7; recommended for English Language Arts, grade 8; English Literature, grades 9-12; and African American History, grades 7-9)

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