

coming on home soon by jacqueline woodson

Coming on Home Soon by Jacqueline Woodson is a poignant children's book that captures the emotions of separation and longing during a significant period in American history. Set against the backdrop of World War II, the story revolves around a young girl named Ada Ruth who experiences the heart-wrenching absence of her mother, who has gone to work in a war-related job. Woodson's narrative is not only a reflection of personal loss but also a broader commentary on the sacrifices made by families during times of conflict. Through simple yet powerful language, Woodson conveys the themes of family, resilience, and hope.

Overview of the Story

Coming on Home Soon introduces readers to Ada Ruth, a young African American girl living in a northern city during the 1940s. As her mother leaves to work in a factory, Ada Ruth is left in the care of her grandmother. The book portrays the challenges and emotional struggles faced by Ada Ruth as she navigates her day-to-day life without her mother.

The Setting

The setting of the story plays a crucial role in understanding Ada Ruth's experiences.

- Time Period: The narrative unfolds during World War II, a time when many families were affected by the war's demands.
- Location: The urban environment where Ada Ruth lives is depicted through vivid illustrations that complement Woodson's narrative.
- Cultural Context: The book captures the essence of African American life during the 1940s, illustrating the community's resilience and the impact of the war on their lives.

Character Analysis

The characters in Coming on Home Soon are richly developed, allowing readers to connect with their emotions and experiences.

1. Ada Ruth: The protagonist, Ada Ruth, is a relatable and strong-willed young girl. Her feelings of abandonment and longing for her mother are central to the narrative.
2. Ada Ruth's Mother: Though she is not physically present for much of the story, Ada Ruth's mother is a significant figure whose absence profoundly affects her daughter.
3. Grandmother: Ada Ruth's grandmother is a source of comfort and support. She embodies strength and wisdom, helping Ada Ruth cope with her feelings.
4. Community Members: The book also features other characters from the community who represent solidarity and shared experiences among families dealing with similar separations.

Thematic Elements

Jacqueline Woodson expertly weaves several themes throughout *Coming on Home Soon*, making it a multi-dimensional story.

Separation and Longing

One of the most prominent themes is the pain of separation. Ada Ruth's longing for her mother is palpable, and her emotions resonate with anyone who has experienced similar feelings of loss.

- Emotional Struggles: The story delves into Ada Ruth's internal conflict and her attempts to cope with her mother's absence.
- Letters: The letters that Ada Ruth and her mother exchange symbolize their connection and the hope that sustains them through their separation.

Resilience and Hope

Despite the sadness that pervades the narrative, there is an underlying message of resilience and hope.

- Community Strength: The support from family and friends emphasizes the importance of community during difficult times.
- Ada Ruth's Growth: As the story progresses, Ada Ruth learns to channel her emotions into positive actions, showcasing her growth and resilience.

Historical Context

Woodson's story is firmly rooted in the historical context of World War II, providing readers with insight into the experiences of African American families during this time.

- War Efforts: The book highlights how many women, including Ada Ruth's mother, took on roles in the workforce to support the war effort.
- Racial Dynamics: It subtly addresses the racial inequalities of the time, providing a platform for discussions about history and social justice.

Illustrations and Their Impact

Illustrated by James Ransome, the artwork in *Coming on Home Soon* complements Woodson's text beautifully.

- Visual Storytelling: The illustrations depict the emotional landscape of the characters,

bringing to life the feelings of joy, sadness, and hope.

- Cultural Representation: Ransome's artwork captures the essence of the African American experience, adding depth to the narrative.

Connection to Young Readers

Woodson's writing style is accessible and engaging, making it suitable for young readers.

- Language: The use of simple yet evocative language allows children to grasp complex emotions.
- Relatable Themes: The themes of family and separation resonate with children, fostering empathy and understanding.

Discussion Questions and Activities

To enhance the reading experience, here are some discussion questions and activities that can be used in classrooms or family settings:

Discussion Questions

1. How does Ada Ruth feel about her mother leaving?
2. What role does Ada Ruth's grandmother play in her life?
3. How do letters help maintain the bond between Ada Ruth and her mother?
4. What does the story tell us about the experiences of families during World War II?
5. How does the community support Ada Ruth and her grandmother?

Activities

- Letter Writing: Encourage children to write letters to family members or friends, expressing their feelings and thoughts.
- Illustration Project: Have children create their own illustrations that depict a scene from the book, focusing on the emotions conveyed.
- Role-Playing: Organize a role-playing session where children can act out scenes from the book, allowing them to explore the characters' emotions.

Conclusion

Coming on Home Soon by Jacqueline Woodson is a beautifully crafted narrative that resonates with readers of all ages. Through the lens of a young girl's experience, Woodson explores profound themes of separation, resilience, and hope, all set against a significant historical backdrop. The emotional depth of the characters, coupled with the stunning

illustrations, creates a reading experience that is both moving and enlightening. This book not only serves as a valuable resource for understanding the historical context of World War II but also fosters discussions about family, community, and the universal experience of longing for loved ones. It stands as a testament to the power of storytelling in bridging generational gaps and nurturing empathy among young readers.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the main themes explored in 'Coming On Home Soon' by Jacqueline Woodson?

The main themes in 'Coming On Home Soon' include family separation, hope, and the longing for loved ones. The story reflects on the impact of war on families, particularly focusing on a mother's feelings as she awaits her husband's return.

How does Jacqueline Woodson use illustrations to enhance the storytelling in 'Coming On Home Soon'?

Jacqueline Woodson collaborates with illustrator E.B. Lewis to create evocative illustrations that complement the emotional depth of the text. The artwork helps to convey the characters' feelings and the setting, making the story more relatable and impactful for readers.

What age group is 'Coming On Home Soon' suitable for, and how does it cater to that audience?

'Coming On Home Soon' is primarily aimed at children ages 5 to 8. It uses simple yet poignant language and relatable emotions to engage young readers, making it an effective tool for discussing complex topics like separation and resilience in a way that they can understand.

What is the significance of the setting in 'Coming On Home Soon'?

The setting plays a crucial role in 'Coming On Home Soon,' as it is set during World War II, which underscores the historical context of family separation due to war. This backdrop amplifies the emotional stakes of the story, highlighting the struggles and sacrifices faced by families during that time.

How does 'Coming On Home Soon' address the concept of resilience?

The story showcases resilience through the protagonist's hope and determination while waiting for her father to return home. Despite the challenges posed by his absence, she finds ways to cope and maintain a sense of normalcy, demonstrating the strength of

familial bonds and the human spirit.

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