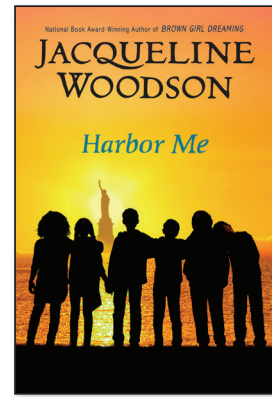


# Harbor Me

*Who will harbor you? This is a question that a special group of kids grapple with when they are invited to a classroom and are encouraged to talk about anything and everything. Each child has a different story and a different struggle. As they grow more and more connected they learn the valuable lesson that everyone needs someone to harbor them.*

- ✓ **Current Topics**
- ✓ **Personal Narrative**
- ✓ **Metaphor**



## Dive in & Discuss

1. Why is it important to document and preserve memories? Why does Haley want to record the stories of the kids in the ARTT room?
2. The kids in the ARTT room are described as “Eight special kids” (Chapter 2, pg 5). Discuss what this might mean. What do you think is the criteria for being in the group? What do you think is the purpose of the group? Find evidence in the text to support your thinking.
3. Compare and contrast Haley and Esteban. How are their family situations alike, specifically with their fathers? How are they different? How does Esteban’s situation help Haley come to terms with her own family’s story?
4. Explore the dynamic between Ashton and the rest of the group. How is he different from the others in the group? How is he similar? How do the similarities and differences among the students in the group affect their relationships with one another?
5. Define *harbor*. Discuss the literal definition and how this connects to the metaphorical meaning. Discuss what it means to harbor someone. What are ways that you do this in your life? What are the ways that you or a family member or friend are harbored? What examples can you find in your community where you see organizations or groups harboring?

## Explore & Extend

### *Who’s Who? Character Analysis*

Ms. Laverne says the Ailanthus tree is a metaphor for each of the kids just like in the story *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* (Chapter 1, pg 2). Research characteristics of the Ailanthus tree. Discuss each student and how their story shares characteristics with the tree. Who are the “eight special kids” in the ARTT room? Divide the class into small groups and assign one of the members of the ARTT group to each classroom group. Each group should thoroughly analyze the character and make a biography page to distribute to the rest of the class. The page should include as many details as they can find in the book as well as things about the character that they can infer from the text, such as how the character changes or develops through the

story and why. The group should also agree upon one or two quotations that really help highlight their character. This student-created resource can be referred to as the book is discussed and explored.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3** *Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.*

### **Relevant Topics | Current Events**

Esteban says, “We heard that my papi’s somewhere in Florida now. . . It’s like a jail. But my papi didn’t do anything bad. He was just working in the factory and they came and took him” (Chapter 11, pg 49). Immigration has been a controversial political topic in America recently but also throughout its history. Woodson addresses it exclusively through the eyes of the child. Why might she have made this choice? Build students’ background knowledge about immigration. Explore the resource below to enhance their understanding before or during the reading of this book.

[http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/newamericans/foreducators\\_index.html](http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/newamericans/foreducators_index.html)

After creating a safe harbor for your own students to share their respectful thoughts, opinions and analyses, encourage discussion on the following topics: What struggles do immigrants face in their journey? What are the debates surrounding immigration? Where have immigrants to the United States emigrated from in the past? What was Jacqueline Woodson’s purpose for writing this book? How is she harboring people by writing this story?

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2** *Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.*

### **Poetry Connection**

Esteban shares his father’s poems with the kids in the ARTT room. They are filled with feeling and emotion. They have the power to make Esteban feel close to his father when he is very far away. Encourage students to write poetry that Esteban might write to his father or write poetry for one of their family members. Ask your students: How does writing poetry help you communicate in a different way? Explore other mediums of self-expression with your students, including rap, ballet, hip-hop, painting, photography, etc., and how each has its own techniques to convey emotions and beliefs. Have students bring in or present their favorite form of expression.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.10** *Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.*

### **Step into the Room**

Much of this story takes place in a special room in a school called the ARTT room. The kids that are chosen have mixed feelings as they enter the room. They all have a different story and are encouraged to share with one another in their own way every Friday afternoon. Read *The Day You Begin* aloud to the class. Do you think this book is a good companion to *Harbor Me*? Why or why not? How does this picture book tell a similar story to the novel? How are the two pieces different? How could this book be useful for the eight special kids in the ARTT room? Review the definition of *theme* with the students. What are some of the themes that are present in *Harbor Me* and *The Day You Begin*? Ask partners to generate a list for each book and compare to see how many themes the books have in common. Challenge your students to bring in one of their favorite books with a similar theme to share with the class.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9** *Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.*