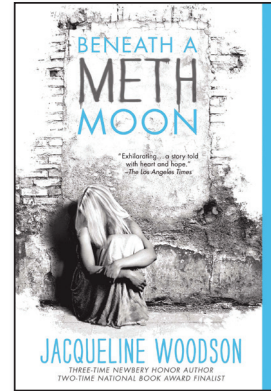


# Beneath a Meth Moon

*A heartbreaking tale of addiction explores how great loss can lead to bad choices. Will Laurel pull through her pain and find the strength to get her head back above the water?*

- ✓ **Setting**
- ✓ **Allusions**
- ✓ **Great for Studying Narrative!**



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## Dive In & Discuss

1. Woodson mentions *water* in the first line of the novel. What role does water play throughout Laurel's journey? What might it symbolize?
2. How does Laurel use writing in her life? Why does it seem so important to her?
3. Woodson alludes to the passage of time often in her story. Do you think we can ever "put our past behind us" as her daddy says (44)?
4. What clues does Woodson give that Laurel is losing herself to meth?
5. How does Woodson weave the theme of hope throughout Laurel's journey? If the story continued after Laurel drops Jesse Jr. at preschool, do you believe Laurel would stay clean and healthy? Why or why not?

## Explore & Extend

### Postcard Settings

Laurel's pain travels with her as she moves from one place to the next. Explore and research the real places that this fictional character lived (i.e., Pass Christian, Jackson, Long Beach, Galilee). Examine the links below to learn more about Hurricane Katrina and what loss real families experienced. Consider why Woodson has her novel ramble through these different settings. How do these settings shape Laurel? How do they drive the plot? How does Woodson's fictional portrayal of a life unraveling after Katrina compare with historical accounts? Have students choose one of the settings. Writing from Laurel's perspective and voice, students write to one of Laurel's friends or relatives explaining the effect that that setting is having on her.

Teacher Resources

<http://www.history.com/topics/hurricane-katrina>

<http://mshistorynow.mdah.state.ms.us/articles/253/voices-of-katrina>

**W.CCR.9** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection and research.

### Annotating Poetry

Woodson alludes to both Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken" and William Butler Yeats' poem "The Lake Isle of Innisfree." Why might she do this? To try to answer this question, it is important students understand each of the poems first and then make comparisons to *Beneath a Meth Moon*. On a projected screen, display the first poem. Invite students to come to the front of the class and interact with the poem in three ways: a) underline and write who, what, when, where, and why in red, b) circle images they can see, feel, hear, taste, or smell in blue, and c) write questions they still have in green. Do the same with the second poem. Discuss their annotations as you go. In small groups, students then discuss why they think Woodson would allude to these poems in her novel. What do they add to the story? How do these poems address similar themes? Each student then writes a personal letter to Woodson explaining why they think these allusions were either effective or not. Encourage students to use topic sentences and details from the discussions to support their claims.

**R.CCR.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.

**W.CCR.1** Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

### Stories from Stories

Woodson has said that one of the reasons she wrote this book was to help her deal with the sadness she felt from Hurricane Katrina. She said there were so many sad stories that she wanted to write her own happy ending to at least one of them. And Laurel's grandmother M'lady tells her that "the best stories come from other people's stories" (24). Have students interview a friend or family member about one moment in his/her life that is poignant, that changed them in some way, and that taught them something. Students then use their notes to write that person's story and life lesson. Invite the interviewed family and friends for "Stories at Sunset"—a celebration of lessons learned.

**W.CCR.3** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

### Writing to Understand & Heal

Jacqueline Woodson writes in her memoir "When I feel powerless against something, the thing I end up doing is writing about it and coming to understand it through writing about it. I'm hoping that readers will come to understand the enormity of the devastation by reading about it" (Woodson, 186). What did you learn more about in reading *Beneath a Meth Moon*? Have the class brainstorm a difficult/painful universal struggle in young people's lives and/or in society today. Each student chooses one from the list to research (and understand it, like Woodson!). Using their new understanding, students then write a fictional narrative with a developed character whose struggle drives the story. Will their narratives end hopeful like Woodson's?

**W.CCR.7** Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.