Literature Circle Questions

Use these questions and the activities that follow to get more out of the experience of reading *Locomotion* by Jacqueline Woodson.

1. What is Lonnie’s full name, and how did he get his name?

2. Lonnie writes about sometimes going to the drugstore to smell the honeysuckle talcum powder. Why does he do this?

3. Though Lonnie doesn’t live with his sister anymore, he often writes about her. What kind of brother is Lonnie to his sister Lili? How do we know?

4. Why do you think Lonnie is so irritated with Ms. Marcus—his favorite teacher—when she assigns the class to write about their families?

5. Miss Edna is overjoyed because her son Rodney is coming back to the city to live. How does Lonnie feel about Rodney, and what role does Rodney end up playing in Lonnie’s life?

6. How does Lonnie react when he hears that Eric, his classmate who has often been mean to him, is hospitalized with sickle cell anemia? What can we tell about Lonnie from the way he responds to this news?

7. When his friends are trying to outdo one another with tall tales of the strange things they’ve seen, Lonnie just says, “Never seen nothing.” Why doesn’t he talk about his family tragedy with his friends? Can you imagine how you would be, in Lonnie’s shoes?

8. Lili gives Lonnie her Bible and often talks about God with him. Why do you think it is so important to Lili for her brother to “find God”? Do you think Lonnie “finds God” as his sister hopes?

9. Lonnie writes four poems about Clyde, the new boy in his class. Why do you think he is so fascinated by Clyde? Do you think he relates to Clyde in any way?

10. When Lonnie is in church with Miss Edna, he writes the word *HOPE* on his hand. What do you think this means? Why does he do this, and what does this have to do with the other experiences he has?

11. Through the book, Lonnie’s idea of home starts to change. What does home mean to Lonnie at the end of the book? How do his ideas about this seem to change as he stays longer with Miss Edna?

12. Besides learning about all kinds of poems, from haiku to epistle poems, what does Lonnie learn about writing from Ms. Marcus?
13. Imagine Lonnie’s life five or ten years after the end of *Locomotion* and make some predictions about his future. Who or what does Lonnie care about? Who are his friends? Does he still write? What kind of person is he?

14. Do you think Miss Edna is a good foster mother to Lonnie? Did your ideas about her change as you read the book? Give examples from the story to support your answer.

15. As you read, did you admire Lonnie in any way? What do you like best about Lonnie? Would you want him as your friend?

*Note: These questions are keyed to Bloom’s taxonomy as follows: Knowledge: 1-2; Comprehension: 3-5; Application: 6-7; Analysis: 8-11; Synthesis: 12-13; Evaluation: 14-15*

**Activities**

1. Throughout the book, Lonnie is encouraged by his fifth grade teacher Ms. Marcus who really makes an impact on him. Imagine that Ms. Marcus is writing an email or letter to another teacher friend in which she describes her fifth grade class, including Lonnie. What would she say about Lonnie and about his class? How does she view her job as a teacher? Write a letter as if you are Ms. Marcus, and share your thoughts and feelings about your job, your class, and Lonnie.

2. Lonnie’s store in *Locomotion* is not told in chronological order; instead Lonnie tells his story as the memories come to him. Create a timeline of his life, starting with his birth and going up to fifth grade, using as many of the events from the novel as you can in the order they happened. Illustrate your timeline with small pictures or symbols for each event, and use a color key to show what each experience meant to Lonnie. For example, you might write his painful experiences in red, his happy experiences in yellow, and his learning experiences in green.

3. Try to imitate Lonnie’s poetic style. Choose a memory or story of your own, and write it like he does in a few, carefully-chosen words. Try to pay attention to spacing and line breaks, and give your poem a title. When you’re finished, illustrate your poem, using colors to show the mood your poem portrays.

**Other Books by This Author**

*If You Come Softly, Hush, Last Summer with Maizon, I Hadn’t Meant to Tell You This, Miracle’s Boys* (all published by Putnam)

**Author Web site:** [www.jacquelinewoodson.com](http://www.jacquelinewoodson.com)