That summer the fence that stretched through our town seemed bigger. We lived in a yellow house on one side of it. White people lived on the other. And Mama said, "Don't climb over that fence when you play." She said it wasn't safe.

That summer there was a girl who wore a pink sweater. Each morning she climbed up on the fence and stared over at our side. Sometimes I stared back. She never sat on that fence with anybody, that girl didn't.

Once, when we were jumping rope, she asked if she could play. And my friend Sandra said no without even asking the rest of us.

I don't know what I would have said. Maybe yes. Maybe no.

That summer everyone and everything on the other side of that fence seemed far away. When I asked my mama why, she said, "Because that's the way things have always been."

Sometimes when me and Mama went into town, I saw that girl with her mama. She looked sad sometimes, that girl did.

"Don't stare," my mama said. "It's not polite."

It rained a lot that summer. On rainy days that girl sat on the fence in a raincoat. She let herself get all wet and acted like she didn't even care. Sometimes I saw her dancing around in puddles, splashing and laughing.

Mama wouldn't let me go out in the rain. "That's why I bought you rainy-day toys," my mama said. "You stay inside here—where it's warm and safe and dry."

But every time it rained, I looked for that girl. And I always found her. Somewhere near the fence.

Someplace in the middle of the summer, the rain stopped. When I walked outside, the grass was damp and the sun was already high up in the sky. And I stood there with my hands up in the air. I felt brave that day. I felt free.
I got close to the fence and that girl asked me my name. "Clover," I said. "My name's Annie," she said. "Annie Paul. I live over yonder," she said, "by where you see the laundry. That's my blouse hanging on the line."

She smiled then. She had a pretty smile.

And then I smiled. And we stood there looking at each other, smiling. "It's nice up on this fence," Annie said. "You can see all over."

I ran my hand along the fence. I reached up and touched the top of it.

"A fence like this was made for sitting on," Annie said. She looked at me sideways.

"My mama says I shouldn't go on the other side," I said.
"My mama says the same thing. But she never said nothing about sitting on it."
"Neither did mine," I said.

That summer me and Annie sat together on that fence. And when Sandra and them looked at me funny, I just made believe I didn't care.

Some mornings my mama watched us. I waited for her to tell me to get down from that fence before I break my neck or something. But she never did.

"I see you made a new friend," she said one morning. And I nodded and Mama smiled.

That summer me and Annie sat on that fence and watched the whole wide world around us.

One day Sandra and them were jumping rope near the fence and we asked if we could play. "I don't care," Sandra said.

And when we jumped, Sandra and me were partners, the way we used to be.

When we were too tired to jump anymore, we sat up on the fence, all of us in a long time.

"Someday somebody's going to come along and knock this old fence down," Annie said.
And I nodded, "Yeah," I said. "Someday."
Exploring Symbolism

The Other Side
By Jacqueline Woodson

A symbol is an action, object, or event that has an underlying meaning. They express or represent hidden ideas.

Group Discussion Questions

Discuss with parents

Answer the questions below to better understand how objects and a character’s actions can be symbols.

1. Discuss the importance of the setting to the story.
2. Why do you think the author chose to tell the story from the perspective of a young black girl?
3. What does the fence symbolize?
4. What does Mama really mean when she tells Clover that it isn’t safe to climb over the fence?
5. What gives Clover the courage to speak to Annie?
6. How did sitting on the fence impact Annie’s relationship with her friends?
7. How did Clover and Annie’s simple act of resistance change her friends’ attitudes toward Annie?
8. Why is sitting on the fence considered an act of resistance?
9. Reread the first page. From Clover’s perspective, the fence seemed “bigger” this summer. What does Clover mean by this?
10. At the end, all the girls sit together on the fence. What message does this create?

Think About

On the lines below, explain how you can use friendship to overcome social injustices. In the space provided, draw a symbol that represents your ideas.
The girls in this story believe somebody will knock down the fence someday. Do you think the fence is still standing, or is it gone today? Share your thoughts and conclusions using complete sentences and correct paragraph format.
This story shows that change can happen little by little, one child at a time.
What changes would YOU like to make in today's world?
Please express your thoughts using complete sentences.
Name: Be a Good Friend to Everyone!

What can YOU say to show respect and kindness to YOUR friends? This might be a good time to practice using quotation marks!
Letter to the Author Activity

Write a letter to Jacqueline Woodson, the author of *The Other Side*. In this letter, please discuss your favorite part of the book. Include details from the book and two reasons for your choice. Be sure to use all the elements of a friendly letter in your writing. Have fun!
Dear Jacqueline Woodson,
Have you ever done something even though you were told not to? If you’re like most of us, you probably have. Maybe you took a piece of yummy, mouthwatering cake, perhaps you stole a perfectly ripe orange off of your neighbor’s tree, or maybe you even took a little money from an annoying sibling. Although those actions probably aren’t the best choices, doing something forbidden is not always a bad thing. Believe it or not, it doing something you’re not supposed to do can actually turn out to be something good. In the story *The Other Side*, Jacqueline Woodson shows us that sometimes it takes bravery to act against the status quo (that’s just a fancy way of saying acting against the way things have always been). This simple, yet incredibly powerful story takes place in a segregated, small-town American neighborhood in the 1950s. Two girls, Clover who is African American and Annie who is White, live on opposite sides of a fence that separate people by race. One day, Clover, motivated by her curiosity and bravery, decides to approach and finally touch the fence. Over time, she and Annie become friends, something that everyone around them learns to accept. This story reveals that if you are brave and stand up against the status quo, especially during times of racism, it can result in something good.

At the commencement of the story, Jacqueline Woodson presented racism and curiosity as critical concepts. Racism first emerged when we were introduced to the fence that divided Whites from African Americans. This is an instance of racism, because people were treated differently because the color of their skin. The main character, Clover, revealed that she lived "on one side of it" while White people inhabited the other. Clover was warned to stay away from the fence because "it wasn't safe." That made Clover fearful to approach the fence. Racism also surfaced when Clover's friends prohibited Annie, a White girl, from playing with them. Clover's curiosity about her surroundings and situation grew, prompting her to ask her mom why it was like this. In response, her mom said explained, "Because that's the way things have always been." As a result, Clover grew increasingly curious. She'd observe Annie splashing around on rainy days. Clearly, the division that resulted from racism caused curiosity to grow in Clover.

Later, Clover's curiosity motivated bravery and independence. One day, after all the rain had cleared, Clover felt brave as she stood outside in the sun: "I stood there with my hands up in the air. I felt brave that day. I felt free." As such, she finally went up to the fence that divided White people from African Americans. The girls introduced themselves to one another, as Clover sat on the fence, and Annie stood beside her on the ground. Clover demonstrated independence by being a free-thinker, getting closer to and eventually "running [her] hand along the fence." Shortly after, Clover's brave and independent actions resulted in a friendship between her and Annie. That summer, the girls "sat together on that fence." Clover was such an independent girl that she didn't care what Sandra and the other girls thought. As you can see, Clover's curiosity about Annie drove her to be brave and led to her complete independence and freedom from racism.
In the end, friendship and acceptance emerged as significant concepts. For example, Clover's mom saw the girls sitting together on the fence, an illustration of their true friendship, but Clover's mom didn't get angry at her. Instead, she said, "I see you made a new friend." Clover's mother accepted her daughter's newfound bravery and independence. The girls' friendship continued to develop as they sat on the fence all summer long and "watched the whole wide world around [them]." Even Sandra, who had been skeptical and disapproving, finally accepted Annie and let her play with them. In the end, all of the girls sat atop the fence "in a long line." Thus, Clover's bravery and independence resulted in a deep friendship with Annie and inspired acceptance in those around her.

As you've read, The Other Side is a simple, yet important story that is really about how important it is to act with bravery and stand up for what's right. This is especially critical in times of racism and injustice, when people are discriminated against and mistreated because of things outside of their control, such as the color of their skin, their religion, or their culture. The status quo will only change because of individuals' brave actions. Because Clover was curious about the world around her, she developed an awareness that things weren't right. She used her naturally curious nature to motivate her bravery, allowing her to break away from oppressive rules and regulations. In doing so, Clover stood up against the injustice in her world. Her brave act inspired others to do so, as well. The Other Side teaches us just how critical it is to be brave and stand up for what's right. Because stories are there to teach us how to live more smartly, in my life I must always be aware of my surroundings, consider whether it's right, and think about Clover to inspire my own bravery. What can you do to rise up against injustices in your world?
Discussion Questions to Use

1. How does the author describe the importance of friendship and how can it impact a person's life?

2. Discuss the challenges of maintaining relationships and how they can be overcome.

3. How does the author's perspective on friendship change throughout the text?

4. What role does technology play in modern friendships and how can we ensure that it doesn't diminish the value of face-to-face interactions?

5. Reflect on a personal experience where a friendship significantly impacted your life in a positive or negative way.

Before Viewing Activities

1. Review the main idea of the text and brainstorm potential questions.

2. Create a list of key vocabulary terms and their definitions.

3. Develop a list of the text's main themes and how they are explored.

In the Classroom Box: True Story from the Underground

1. Discuss the significance of the Underground Railroad and how it relates to themes of freedom and justice.

2. Analyze the role of individuals in the Underground Railroad and the challenges they faced.

3. Explore how the Underground Railroad contributed to the broader movement for abolition.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will compare and contrast events before and after the Civil War.

2. Students will analyze the role of women in the Underground Railroad.

3. Students will identify the causes of the Civil War.

4. Students will understand the significance of the Underground Railroad.

5. Students will evaluate the impact of the Civil War on American society.

Summary

1. Reflect on the main points of the text and how they connect to broader historical themes.

2. Discuss the importance of understanding historical events and how they shape modern society.

3. Identify any personal connections to the material discussed.

4. Consider the implications of the text for our contemporary world and how it challenges or reinforces our current beliefs.

THE OTHER SIDE

Parent/Teacher