

Family Paideia Seminar Plan

Text: **lessons** by Jacqueline Woodson

Ideas, Values: Family, Courage, Defiance, Desire, Duty

Pre-Seminar Content

Big Ideas Chat:

When was the last time you were asked to learn something you did not want to? Have a brief chat about what it was, how it felt, and whether you learned it or avoided learning it.

(Parents, think about sharing a time from when you were a child, or a time very recently that you were asked to learn something that you did not want to learn.)

1st Read:

Read aloud the text while family and/or friends listen.

Vocabulary:

Discuss the unfamiliar words in the story. Explain what they mean, figure them out from the sentence, or look them up in a dictionary.

2nd Read:

Allow another participant in the discussion to read the text aloud. Make note to focus on the “Ideas and Values” listed above as you listen or read.

Pre-Seminar Process:

* Share why you are having the discussion.

(Sample script from our classroom Paideia Seminars: Modify to fit your household.)

*“A Paideia seminar is a collaborative, intellectual dialogue about a text, facilitated with open ended questions.”*

*“The main purpose of seminar is to arrive at a fuller understanding of the textual ideas and values, of ourselves, and of each other.”*

* Describe what you want to accomplish.
* Set a Family Goal.
* To balance the talk time
* To refer to the text
* To ask a question
* To speak out of uncertainty
* To build on others’ comments

Seminar Questions:

* Opening (Identify main ideas from the text):
  + What is one word you would use to describe the poem, “lessons”? Have younger kids share first if they feel comfortable and advance by age. (Don’t share your why until after everyone has had a chance to answer.)
  + Why did you pick this word? (Anyone can share)
* Core (Analyze textual details):
  + Why does the author choose to switch certain stanzas to italics? How do you know this? (Anyone can share)
  + Why does the mom allow the girls to go outside, even if she wants them to learn how to cook?
  + The poem is titled ***lessons***. What are the lessons being shared by the author in this poem?
  + Do you think the mom would have let the girls outside if she knew they were “running wild?” (Why do you think this?)
* Closing (Personalize and apply the ideas):
  + What is one thing you might do if you were allowed outside with friends?

(Why would you do that particular thing? Would it have been the same answer if you were not “stuck at home” for the next coming weeks?

Post-Seminar Process:

*“Ask each person what they liked most about the discussion.”*

* Have the family do a quick check of the discussion goal.

Post Seminar Content:

* Transition to Writing:

Review and discuss key ideas that you heard, said, and thought during the family seminar.

* Brainstorm:

Think back to the Big Ideas Chat about learning something you did not want to. How can you be sure that that skill or new knowledge will not be valuable later in life?

* Family Activity:

Develop a brief one-minute video message trying to convince a friend or family member to learn something new. Think of a particular skill; make sure you give a few reasons why it might be essential, and even though it does not seem fun now, why learning this new thing will be worth the time.

If you like your video, share it to social media and tag the National Paideia Center! @PaideiaCenter.

This Paideia Lesson Plan was created by:

Name: Jeremy Spielman

Organization: National Paideia Center

\*Text is attached if open sourced.

# lessons

BY [JACQUELINE WOODSON](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/jacqueline-woodson)

My mother says:

When Mama tried to teach me

to make collards and potato salad

I didn't want to learn.

She opens the box of pancake mix, adds milk

and eggs, stirs. I watch

grateful for the food we have now—syrup waiting

in the cabinet, bananas to slice on top.

It's Saturday morning.

Five days a week, she leaves us

to work at an office back in Brownsville.

Saturday we have her to ourselves, all day long.

Me and Kay didn't want to be inside cooking.

She stirs the lumps from the batter, pours it

into the buttered, hissing pan.

Wanted to be with our friends

running wild through Greenville.

There was a man with a peach tree down the road.

One day Robert climbed over that fence, filled a bucket

with peaches. Wouldn't share them with any of us but

told us where the peach tree was. And that's where we

wanted to be

sneaking peaches from that man's tree, throwing

the rotten ones

at your uncles!

Mama wanted us to learn to cook.

Ask the boys, we said. And Mama knew that wasn't fair

girls inside and the boys going off to steal peaches!

So she let all of us

stay outside until suppertime.

And by then, she says, putting our breakfast on the table,

it was too late.

Jacqueline Woodson, "lessons" from Brown Girl Dreaming. Copyright © 2014 by Jacqueline Woodson. Used by permission of Nancy Paulsen Books, an imprint of Penguin Young Readers Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC.

Source: Brown Girl Dreaming (Nancy Paulsen Books, 2014)

\*Text is cited if it needs to be procured.

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/58423/lessons-56d23cc927c21>