



# Read Aloud Guide

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**Title:** *The Day You Begin*, by Jacqueline Woodson, illustrated by Rafael Lopez

**Best for:** K - 5

**Summary:** This book is about fitting in, even when you feel like you are different from everyone else. It is not a story, but it's actually an advice book for kids. It discusses how someone might feel different or strange because they are from a different part of the country, or speak differently from others, or did not get to travel for their summer break, or are not invited to play on a team or join an activity. The book explains that all of these things will happen, but that by sharing yourself and your stories with others you will be able to make connections and realize that while everyone is different, everyone also has a lot of shared connections.

**Why we chose this book:** Jacqueline Woodson is the National Ambassador for Young People's Literature. *The Day You Begin* was inspired by a poem in her award-winning memoir, *Brown Girl Dreaming*. We love that this book accurately shows different ways people feel like they don't fit in, and that sometimes feeling different can make us feel uncomfortable but those differences can and should be celebrated too.

**Notes:** While you read, you can have students give a thumbs up sign if they can connect with anything that's happened in the book. If you want to do this, you will have to model it first, and show them what it looks like. You can also do it with them while you read.

**Central themes:** diversity, self-esteem, friendship

**Introducing the book:** This book is about a few different kids and how they feel like they don't fit in at school or with their friends. A fun and low-stakes activity you can try while reading is to have the students make connections with what's happening in the story. While you read, students can give a quiet thumbs up if something like that has happened to them. You can introduce it like this:

*"Today we are going to read a book about a few different kids and how they feel like they don't fit in at school or with their friends. While I read, if you can connect with something that's happening in the story - if something like this has ever happened to you - you can give a quiet thumbs up like this." (Show thumbs up; have students try.)*

**After Reading:** Debrief with students:

*"We just read about some kids who felt like they didn't fit in at some places. What are some things we can do here at school to help people feel welcome in our classroom or school?"*

*"Can anyone share something that makes them feel unique or special?"*

*"Have you ever walked into a room full of people who seemed different from you? How did you feel? Did your feelings change as time went on?"*