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Johnson and his sister, Beebee, seem to be all alone in the world. Their mama has gone away many times before, but something tells them that this time she won't be coming back. Then a social worker comes and takes them to meet their Aunt Gracie. Beebee barely remembers her, and Mama never even told Johnson about her. They wonder where she's been all this time--and why she would want to take care of them. Warily, though, the children begin to trust Aunt Gracie. And in the process, they come to a better understanding of what it means to be a family.

Our Gracie Aunt Details

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Author : Jacqueline Woodson , Jon J. Muth (Illustrator)

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Genre : Childrens, Picture Books, Realistic Fiction, Cultural, African American, Family, Fiction, Family Law, Fostering, Parenting, Adoption

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From Reader Review Our Gracie Aunt for online ebook

Kate says

I can't get enough of Jacqueline Woodson. She's everything you could want in a children's writer: beautiful prose and intuitive and empathetic portrayals of young children. Her books deal with things that are real in children's lives even if we don't want to talk about them. Children need her books and adults need to read them too.

I cried reading this one. At the reference desk.

Kaitlyn says

This is a great story that can help children and families cope with new family situations. This story follows Johnson and Beebee after their mother has left. After a social worker comes by, they go to live with their aunt.

Liliya Rubanenko says

I loved this book! It was a sweet story about two children who are put into foster care under their Aunt. Though the older sister is reluctant to accept this new home, her little brother likes their aunt immediately. By the end of the story, the siblings learn to love their new home and appreciate the fact that their aunt will never leave them. I would use this book to talk about families and foster care.

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Copyright: 2002

Jenny says

This is a great book that I think would help children relate to what it may feel like to be placed in foster care. Many powerful discussions could come from reading this as a classroom community.

Brandi Parkhurst says

Johnson and BeeBee are alone in their apartment after their Mama leaves without telling them when, or if, she will be back. A social worker shows up at the house and takes them to live with their Mama's sister Gracie who takes care of them. They uncover the true meaning of family and learn to trust others to take care of them and provide them with their fair share of love.

This is a heart-warming story of a brother and sister's journey into the system of foster care. The colorful, yet simple, illustrations add to the mood and tone of the book overall. The large font of the pages, also makes it

fairly easy to read and suitable for young readers.

I gave this book a 4-star rating as it provides readers with a story that is relatable for children who may be in the same situation as the characters, or know someone else who is. This would be a great resource for teachers when addressing the idea of foster care, which may come up when a new child enters the classroom through that type of situation. In that case, this would prove to be a good read aloud book and/or addition to the classroom library.

Chris Maynard says

Purpose: Picture Book (Wide Reading Project)

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Format: Picture Book

Grades: Primary and Intermediate (though the theme of absentee parenting can be extended into middle school and secondary)

Subjects/Themes: See the bookshelves above.

Classroom Use: Great potential as a read aloud on a very sensitive and difficult subject of a parent who leaves her kids at home for days on end and the foster care that ensues. This book has great relevance in urban settings, though as a teacher, I would first have to know my class to decide whether or not to read to the whole class. The subject matter is tough, though I feel that Woodson's honest presentation could be cathartic and good release for some children who may unfortunately find themselves in similar situations.

Review: This picture book felt like a punch in the gut, with one moment early on especially sad and hard to comprehend, though Woodson provides an honest look at an issue that needs to be discussed. With a social worker knocking on their door, a young girl and her little brother refuse to let her in. One of the children says that Mama has left before but always come back, essentially asking a rhetorical question of whether or not she will return this time. The fact that any child has to ask this question is heartbreaking yet realistic for many kids who have to grow up way earlier than they should. In her typical style, Woodson tells it like is from her characters, resulting in a painfully touching masterpiece as far as I am concerned.

Josiah says

"Everybody needs a little love sometimes."

—Gracie aunt, "Our Gracie Aunt"

This is an insightful, gently written picture book that introduces us to the life situation of Johnson and his older sister Beebee as much by feel as by information on the actual facts. The kids' mother has left them

before the narrative begins, and they are taken away to live with their Aunt Grace, their mother's sister who hasn't communicated with their mother in years.

Johnson and Beebee find a safe haven with their aunt, however, who loves them and agrees to take care of them until their mother can return. Interestingly, it is never said exactly where their mother is, and it isn't even made clear from the illustrations and descriptions when they go to visit her, but such details are not as important as the feel of the story overall. Jacqueline Woodson is an excellent writer who deals with the children's feelings with sensitivity and an overarching love.

"Our Gracie Aunt" is a fresh, nicely told story that leaves the reader with a soothing feeling after reading it. I would certainly consider augmenting the rating to two and a half stars, if that were an option.

"It's good to cry...Crying washes you out inside."

—Gracie aunt

Megan Koval says

This book is about Johnson and his sister BeeBee, whose mother has left them. They are taken from their home by a social worker. The children are scared and are sad to leave because they are afraid that their mother will return while they are gone. They are taken to their Aunt Gracie's house and Johnson is very excited to be there, but BeeBee is reluctant to be there. Soon BeeBee begins to warm up to their aunt. Aunt Gracie always reminds them that not only she loves them, but their mother loves them as well. One day, the social worker comes to take them to see their mom, who is in what appears to be a mental hospital. The children want to go home with their mom, but she is not quite well again. When they return to Aunt Gracie's, they are greeted warmly by her and are shown love and affection by her.

I thought this was an absolutely fantastic book. I think that this book does a great job of showing a very serious family issue in a way small children will be able to understand. I think that it also does a great job of showing the love and compassion various people in children's lives have for them. I thought it was very well thought out that the author had Johnson be incredibly open to his aunt, while BeeBee seemed a bit unsure of her new environment, just as children of their ages would be. I think it is also good that the author included the children seeing their mother to show that she still loved and cared about them.

I think that this book would be a good book to use in a discussion about the different types of families. I think it could also be used by someone such as a school counselor who is dealing with children who are in a difficult family situation where they may be living with a family member that is not one of their parents. I think that this book could be very helpful for children going through tough situations. I would say that this book would be appropriate for children grades K-3. Although it does discuss a bit of a difficult issue, I think that it is important that even younger children are able to understand that not every family is perfect and sometimes there are unusual family circumstances.

Kate Novack says

This is a realistic fiction book is about a brother and sister who go to live with their aunt after their mother cannot take care of them anymore. I really liked this book because I have never seen another children's book

address this topic before and it happens more often than we think. This book is definitely intended for children that are a bit older and have a good grasp on reading, as the text is long and some more advanced vocabulary is used. This book definitely offers children a lot to think about and I think a child in a similar situation would maybe realize that their mother/father is doing what is best for them by giving them up at the time. This book could help children understand the reason why someone would send you to live with a relative and not have hatred towards that person.

The illustrations go along with text very well but I think could have taken up more of the page. On most of the pages 3/4 of the page is text and only a small part is an illustration, usually lacking detail. I think a child might not find these drawings very appealing, but again I think the intended audience is a child that is a bit older and would be focusing more on the text.

My only problem with the book is that by having the characters be African American, the author is stereotyping that this situation usually occurs in African American families. This is usually how this situation is depicted in film as well.

Hannah Lockington says

A boy and his sister feel alone in the world. They're used to the mom leaving, but something feels like she's gone for good. A social worker takes them to their Aunt Gracie (who Beebee barely remembers and hasn't heard of). After getting used to them and more comfortable at her house, they start to come to a better understanding of what it means to be a family.

James Govednik says

This picture book, for ages 5-9, tells the story of two children who seem to be all alone in the world. Through the eyes of Johnson, the youngest child, Jacqueline Woodson takes us along with the social worker who intervenes to find them a home. Johnson is filled with questions, which his older sister (Beebee) answers as best she can. The title reflects Johnson's term for his Aunt Gracie, who takes the children into her home. The story strikes just the right tone regarding the seriousness and sadness of the situation without becoming too tragic for younger readers. The story focuses on compassion instead of judgment, so when we finally meet Mama, we're more interested in seeing the family whole again than anything else. I like this element of this book--children will know peers from fractured family situations, and by seeing the story through their eyes, they can better relate to the needs of the people involved instead of passing judgment or labeling or excluding. Mama's explanation is handled in the same manner. The illustrations are beautiful and convey both the vulnerability of the children at the beginning and their relief and finding security with their Aunt.

Tyne Mather says

Johnson and his sister Beebee have to take care of themselves after their mother leaves. Then they're moved to the Aunt Gracie's house and things start getting better.

Jason Brinley says

Jacqueline Woodson's *Our Gracie Aunt* is a children's fiction picture book that deals with the issue of neglect. The story is told through the eyes of a man looking back to when he and his sister were left to fend for themselves when they were very young, because of a father who is no longer in the picture and a mother who has an addiction problem and is gone for days at a time. The illustrations show an African American boy named Johnson, who looks about five or six years old, and his older sister, BeeBee, who appears to be in her early teens; and they are refusing to open the door for a Miss Roy from a social services-type agency, who has been alerted of the status of things in this home. The story is heart wrenching from the beginning as this young boy has so many questions; e.g. if their Mama is ever coming home and what is foster care. John Muth's illustrations shows the despair on these children's faces so vividly with his use of muted grays and purples against their pale brown complexions. When Miss Roy returns the next morning, she insists that they must allow her to come in and talk with them. BeeBee's guard is up and she is very resistant; however, little Johnson, seems to like this lady. Taking some personal belongings, the children reluctantly go and find out they are being taken to their aunt Gracie's home until their mother can get her life in order. These children know that their mother does not like her sister, and so they are very apprehensive in meeting her. The events that follow in developing a relationship with this aunt, their wish to see their mother, and the decision that is ultimately made for BeeBee and Johnson's future makes this book a must read. Woodson tells this story so touching and tenderly, making the reader aware of the pain and struggles many families go through when there is neglect and abandonment. Muth's illustrations are so beautifully done and capture the struggles and joy of everyone affected by this sad and unfortunate situation. Woodson and Muth have created a brilliant, authentic, eye-opening book that draws the reader in and allows him/her to experience this heart wrenching, yet heartwarming story .

Teachers can use *Our Gracie Aunt* in a lesson about child abuse and neglect, a common issue that faces many families. Educators must make sure that students understand that this is a problem that affects all socioeconomic levels and is not limited to poorer families. After opening a discussion about these topics, teachers should make certain students are informed to report such issues to a family member, a teacher, a pastor, or the school resource officer. *Our Gracie Aunt* would be a good book for students in grades two through six.

Valerie says

Summary/A Thoughtful Review:

In this powerful tale of love and family, Jacqueline Woodson writes the story a brother, Johnson, and sister, Beebee, who are abandoned by their mother several times before, Miss Roy, a social worker comes to take them to a foster home. Beebee tries to make excuses for her mother's absence, but eventually Miss Roy takes them to their mother's sister, Aunt Gracie's house. Here she is waiting to greet them with hugs on the front porch. With a tire swing in the yard, cookies baking in the oven, nighttime "tuck-ins," cooking together, popcorn and scary movies, and even sharing tears over missing Mama, their new home is truly filled with new experiences and unconditional love! Eventually their mother contacts them for a visit, but is very "sick." She explains to her children, "even when a mama loves you, she can't always take care of you. Sometimes she has to go away...[we're not going home:] right now, but when we go home it'll be for always. Your aunt Gracie's going to take good care of you until I can again." In another one of Woodson's brilliant literary works, she writes about a real, but "raw" issue that is present in our current society. By focusing on the new experiences and relationships that are built, she creates a story filled with encouragement and hope! I have a student who I have taught for the past 2 years, as a third and fourth grader, who lives with her grandmother

(and has for many years) because her mother is unable to care for her. Over the years she has struggled to build relationships with peers and adults, as her ability to trust has been so depleted. I would love to share this book with her, helping her to realize that there are others in a similar situation; she is not alone. Thank you to Ms. Woodson for sharing this story with her readers.

Christine Jensen says

Approximate Interest Level/Reading Level: Elementary

Format: Picture Book

Awards: Notable Social Studies Trade Books (2003)

Because of their mother's neglect, two young children are removed from their home by child protective services to go to live with their aunt, who gives them exactly what they have been missing. This deeply emotional story is told from the perspective of the younger brother, who is balancing his need to be taken care of with the guarded reservations of his older sister. Containing nothing superfluous, the illustrations are restrained and poignant, effectively complimenting the emotionality of the text. This book has the potential to explain difficult family situations with sensitivity and compassion.
