

## COMING ON HOME SOON

### Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Award Nominee 2007 Grades 3-5

Submitted by Deanna McMillion, Graduate Student at School of Library and Information Science, LSU (Professor: Dr. Margie Thomas); Dorothy L. Grimsley, Instructor and Mallory Curley, Student at University of Louisiana at Lafayette

**Coming on Home Soon** by Jacqueline Woodson. Illustrated by E.B. Lewis. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2004. 32 p.

#### Summary

Ada Ruth tries her best to be brave when her mother decides to go to Chicago to work on the railroads during World War II. Times are hard and Ada Ruth must remain at home with her grandmother. Ada Ruth knows her mother loves her more than rain and more than snow, but she still misses her more and more. She constantly waits for the arrival of a letter from her mother. When a stray kitten appears on the doorstep, she puts down a saucer of milk. As Grandmother softens towards the kitten, Ada Ruth sees how much her grandmother misses her mother as well. The three of them keep each other company as they await news from Chicago. Finally, a letter with some much-needed money from her mother arrives. The letter also includes the promise that her mother will be coming on home soon.

Woodson's text is simple and spare, conveying pure emotion. The dialogue is written in italics, helping to keep the text clean of even punctuation. She repeats the phrase, "coming on home soon," to reassure not only the characters but also the readers that mother will indeed reappear.

E. B. Lewis has filled the pages with watercolors full of light. Sometimes the light shines through the window or streams in an open door. It is always there to give the illustrations warmth despite the expressions of longing and hope on the faces of Ada Ruth and Grandmother. In one two-page spread, Lewis shows Ada Ruth curled up with the kitten on a rug in front of the fireplace; the fire glows red and orange casting a shadow on Ada Ruth's face that deepens the look of loneliness.

#### Awards

Caldecott Honor Book, 2005  
ALA Notable Book, 2005

#### Author's Biography

Jacqueline Woodson was born on February 12, 1963 in Columbus, Ohio. She grew up in Greenville, South Carolina and Brooklyn, New York. She graduated from college with a B. A. in English. She was a drama therapist for runaways and homeless children in New York City, but she is now a full-time writer. She has received numerous awards for her books, and she has many fans. She currently lives in Brooklyn, New York where she enjoys encouraging young people to write, having heated political discussions with her friends and sewing. More information about Jacqueline Woodson can be found at:

<http://www.jacquelinewoodson.com/bio.shtml>

### **Illustrator's Biography**

Earl Bradley Lewis was born on December 16, 1956 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. After finishing the sixth grade, Lewis started taking art classes on Saturday mornings at the Temple University School Art League, which was run by his uncle. In 1975 he was able to enroll in the Temple University Tyler School of Art and majored in Graphic Design, Illustration, and Art Education. Lewis's paintings are in several prestigious galleries across the United States including the Rosenfield Gallery in Philadelphia, which is his hometown. Lewis teaches illustration classes at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia.

<http://www.eblewis.com/default2.asp>

### **Other Titles by Jacqueline Woodson**

*Behind You*

*Hush*

*If You Come Softly*

*Locomotion*

*The Other Side*

*Our Gracie Aunt*

*Show Way*

*Sweet, Sweet Memory*

*Visiting Day*

*We Had a Picnic This Sunday Past*

### **Related Titles**

#### **African-American Stories**

*Amazing Grace* by Mary Hoffman.

*A Chair for My Mother* by Vera Williams.

*Circle Unbroken: The Story of Basket and its People* by Margot Theis Raven.

*Something Beautiful* by Sharon Dennis Wyeth.

#### **Grandmothers**

*Chicken Sunday* by Patricia Polacco.

*The Hickory Chair* by Lisa Rowe Fraustino.

*Ma Dear's Old Green House* by Denise Lewis Patrick.

*My Nana and Me* by Irene Smalls.

*Patchwork Quilt* by Valerie Flournoy.

#### **Separation of Family**

*Mama Will Be Home Soon* by Nancy Michella.

*While You Are Away* by Eileen Spinelli.

### **Classroom Connections**

#### **Language Arts: Letter-Writing**

- Have students pretend that they are Ada Ruth's mother and have them write a letter to Ada Ruth, describing what it is like working far from home and family.

#### **Art: Card**

- Have students design "Missing You" cards that Ada Ruth could send to her mother.

## **Social Studies**

- Students can compare/contrast life in Ada Ruth's small community to life in the city of Chicago.
- Have students locate Chicago on a map. Students can find pictures and information about Chicago and develop a bulletin board.

## **History**

- Read aloud *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* by Judith Kerr and discuss ways that World War II affected American citizens.
- Invite a World War II veteran as a guest speaker.
- Have students research life in America during World War II. Discuss hardships of families on the "homefront" and the role of women during the war.

## **Web Links**

### **Book, Author, Illustrator**

#### **E.B. Lewis Gallery – R. Michelson Galleries**

[http://www.rmichelson.com/Artist\\_Pages/Lewis/EB\\_Lewis.htm](http://www.rmichelson.com/Artist_Pages/Lewis/EB_Lewis.htm)

A selection of his original watercolors from his children's books at R. Michelson Galleries.

#### **E.B. Lewis Home Page**

<http://www.eblewis.com/default2.asp>

Illustrator's site includes his biography, other works, appearances and awards.

#### **Jacqueline Woodson**

<http://www.jacquelinewoodson.com/>

Author's site includes her biography, bibliography, and awards.

#### **Penguin Reading Guides: The Books of Jacqueline Woodson**

[http://us.penguinroup.com/static/rguides/us/jacqueline\\_woods.html](http://us.penguinroup.com/static/rguides/us/jacqueline_woods.html)

Includes a brief interview with Woodson, a brief biography and an abridged list of her books.

#### **Powell's Books: Coming on Home Soon**

<http://www.powells.com/biblio?isbn=0399237488>

An in-depth description of this book. Includes awards the book has received.

## **History**

### **The Anacostia Museum & Center for African American History and Culture**

<http://anacostia.si.edu/>

Includes on-line exhibitions, links to websites, research centers and reading lists all related to preserving the history and culture of American Americans.

### **The World at War**

<http://www.euronet.nl/users/wilfried/ww2/ww2.htm>

History of WWII with many links.

### **World War II: The Homefront**

<http://library.thinkquest.org/15511/>

This site includes a timeline, museum, family life simulation, resources and participation.

<http://library.thinkquest.org/15511/families/index.htm>

### **Chicago**

#### **City of Chicago**

<http://egov.cityofchicago.org/city/webportal/home.do>

Includes information about the city of Chicago.

### **Trains**

#### **DLTK's Train Craft**

<http://www.dltk-kids.com/crafts/transportation/mtrain.html>

Printable templates for a craft activity for young students to build their own train.

#### **Tina's Train Depot**

<http://education.dot.gov/k5/depot.htm>

This site had links to sites on railroads and train-related activities for the lower grade levels.