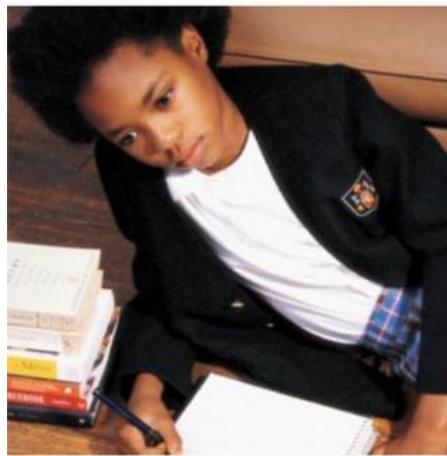


Maizon at Blue Hill



JACQUELINE WOODSON

Winner of the Coretta Scott King Award

Maizon at Blue Hill

Jacqueline Woodson

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Maizon takes the biggest step in her life when she accepts a scholarship to boarding school and says good-bye to her grandmother and her best friend, Margaret. Blue Hill is beautiful, and challenging—but there are only five black students, and the other four are from wealthy families. Does Maizon belong at Blue Hill after all?

"Simply told and finely crafted." (*Publishers Weekly*, starred review)

Maizon at Blue Hill Details

Date : Published September 30th 2002 by Puffin Books (first published 1992)

ISBN : 9780698119574

Author : Jacqueline Woodson

Format : Paperback 176 pages

Genre : Realistic Fiction, Fiction, Cultural, Young Adult, African American, School Stories, Boarding School, Childrens, Middle Grade



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From Reader Review Maizon at Blue Hill for online ebook

Jamaica says

This book was a good read. I remember my mom bought it for me, and I plan to keep it for my daughter(s). It tells a good story of an 11-year-old girl, Maizon, who is awarded a scholarship to an all girl's boarding school. As one of only five black girls, she finds herself alone and missing her grandma and best friend. Despite the other girls of color trying to befriend them, she bonds the most with her roommate, Sandy, who is on scholarship as well. The reason I'm giving it 3 stars is because I wasn't satisfied with the ending. I mean, I understand being home sick, but I just can't support a book when the MC just gives up. I understand why, but still.

Jessica says

This book made me homesick. The experience of dislocation is brilliantly if painfully encapsulated in the story of teenage Maizon leaving her loving black Brooklyn enclave for a white, upper-class Connecticut prep school. YA novels are usually about conquering new worlds, so I was surprised that Maizon didn't adapt, remaining isolated by race. She's an anti-heroine, taking action by refusing and retreating--but there is no question that she is admirable. Her refusal is a moral refusal to accommodate racism in any way.

Leaving one's home, over and over, may be the defining experience of our increasingly globalized and mobilized society, and it's one that most contemporary YA valorizes as a necessary part of growing up. Maizon's refusal to sacrifice home for ambition (or vice versa) is thought-provoking. Are we spreading our wings too far?

Linda Lipko says

While I don't think this is one of Woodson's best works, it is worth the time spent reading. This author is amazingly astute at dealing with the feelings and thoughts of young adults in difficult situations.

Thirteen, living in Brooklyn, NY and secure in the love of her grandmother and her close friend, Maizon is quite confident. She is exceedingly smart, and when she is offered a full academic scholarship at a prestigious private school in Connecticut, her grandmother strongly encourages her to spread her wings and attend.

One of only four black girls, Maizon quickly learns that bigotry and prejudice does not only reside in the affluent white community, but some of the black students display their own ignorance.

Once again, without over dramatizing the story, Woodson astutely guides the reader to an important lesson well learned.

Crystal says

I read this book first in Japanese, because it was recommended to me by a teacher here, and the Japanese edition arrived first. I was a little disappointed that the English language "original" seemed to be missing parts that were in the translation - if they are abridging books, they really ought to write it somewhere. This is the middle of a three-book series, so I will borrow the Japanese versions of the rest of the series from my school library.

The translation includes cultural notes that make the story accessible to young Japanese readers, so it is definitely a book I could recommend to my students.

Carolyn says

wide reading for CI546

grade level: late elementary - middle school

genre: realistic fiction

themes: Family, friendship, racism, stereotypes, discrimination, loneliness, outsider

cultures: Black girl from Brooklyn, heads to mostly white boarding school in Connecticut

awards: this is an ALA Best Book for Young Adults. The author has worn various awards for other books (the Newbery, the Coretta Scott King award).

school use: I don't think I would use this in school. [EDITED TO ADD: I might use some scenes if I was teaching students about code-switching. The scenes of the black girls talking about (and switching back and forth from) colloquial language and "official school language" when Maizon first arrives at school would be good examples to help students identify and understand the language of power.]

review: I did not really like this book (and I have liked previous things by this author, particularly Locomotion and The Other Side).

I thought it took a very surface level look at the themes it touched on -- overt racism like a white girl saying "You know why you're different, you're black. Tell me what that's like" is something the kids I teach deal with all the time. I think kids today are looking for help interpreting the more subtle forms of racism they encounter--being able to ferret out why something is happening and if race has something to do with it. Maybe younger kids (4th-5th graders?) would enjoy it but I think it's too obvious and clunky for older kids to really get involved with.

I thought it had some really awkward transitions as well --for example after her first dinner, walking back to the dorm room by herself, looking at the sky and she's suddenly thinking about her father. That seemed like it came out of nowhere. It's possible that's a standard thing in the series (I haven't read the other books) and doesn't feel as strange to come across if it happened in the previous book(s?) as well.

I felt it was very abrupt (too short!); it seems to end before it's even begun and the narrator has abruptly

made a decision that basically negates most of the action of the book (she chooses to go home).

Monica says

REQUIRED AUTHOR: JACQUELINE WOODSON

Maizon (rhymes with "raisin," which would have been nice to have known at the beginning of the book) is accepted to Blue Hill Academy on scholarship, but she has doubts about leaving her home and her friends and family. She does well in school at Blue Hill, but ultimately decides she's not ready to leave her home behind.

I didn't like it, but to be fair that's probably at least partially due to its being a middle sort of book in a series and the fact that I haven't read the books that come before this one. Still, there were some problems with it that I don't think reading the rest of the series would solve: for instance, Maizon seemed to be at least three or four different ages, jumping back and forth -- I still have no idea how old the girl's actually supposed to be.

Jon says

Maizon at Blue Hill felt different from many of the books that I read in grade school. It was interesting that Maizon had a number of positive and negative character attributes, most of which were the same at the end of the book. It was interesting how there was relatively little character transformation.

In the beginning of the book, Maizon speaks what is on her mind, good and bad. She is somewhat conceited and assertive. "That dumb school isn't even ready for me" (Woodson 16). In her last conversation to Ms. Bender and Miss Norman, she corrects them even after they compliment her having received all A's, "Two A Pluses...History and English" (Woodson 142). Throughout the whole story she is telling everyone that she is smart, she uses it defensively, thinking the others think it can't be true. In her last reflection she comments confidently, as she has throughout the whole book, "Maybe my gift was that I had lived somewhere a long time before this. Maybe that's where my knowledge came from" (Woodson 148). I sat for awhile, looking at this phrase, wondering how it spoke to Maizon's character and experiences. She is still just as confident. She was wrong. She did have some good times at Blue Hill, there were more people than she thought on scholarship, more people than she thought understood The Bluest Eye, and she did make at least one friend in Sandy. Yet in the end she is completely confident in her decision to leave Blue Hill, despite these experiences. Confidence is a powerful asset, but Maizon fails to embody the lesson presented to her at Blue Hill, that she may not always be right, that she may not always have the right answers. In this way, Maizon fails to evolve.

However, it is interesting to note that many, by no means all, but many of her assumptions as to the effect of her race were correct. Her peers' first impressions are that she is a black girl. Many are curious as to how she is different, but she wisely responds that she is not. Beforehand, she introspectively comments, "I hated the word minorities...I don't consider myself less than anyone" (Woodson 2).

Her lack of evolution, her continual confidence, and her experiences with race relations are all interesting themes for students to study. The book does not have a happy ending, where Maizon learns something and imparts some wisdom to the students at Blue Hill and finds herself happy there. Maizon fails to adjust, the racist black girls do not learn anything, the students do not evolve. The reader is frustrated, prompting their contemplation on what they would have done if they were a character in the book. The last sentence of the book, "And somewhere inside that strong solid thing, I'd find a place where smart black girls from Brooklyn could feel like they belonged" (Woodson 149). This conclusion can foster in students the impression that

racism, and perhaps some other issues, are not so easily resolved, and the author is not going to pretend otherwise, and it actually requires effort, on their part and others. Certainly they don't want to be like many of the students in the book. Aside from this interesting moral implication, the lack of character transformation, so typical in other books, can be a source of significant class discussion. How did her person strengths and weaknesses play into her successes and failures?

A writer would be hard pressed to assert that the book has an overall racist overlay; however, it is interesting to note that Pauli, who is presented in a positive light throughout the book, comments, "First I denied the black part of myself to try to fit, then I denied the white part of me. Then I just accepted both. I mean, I am black and white...I can't choose between the two" (Woodson 130). This is contrary to the sentiment expressed during their reading of *The Bluest Eye*, where the moral of the discussion was that it was unfortunate that a black person desired to be white, the idea presumably being that it didn't matter if you were white or black. Here Pauli asserts that she is identifying herself as both black and white, after trying to figure out how to resolve the fact that she is both. Why does she feel that way? There was no talk after her comment that she should worry about identifying herself the way she wishes to identify herself, and not on her ethnic origins. To state an obvious point, ancestral origins should not determine who one is, though sometimes society puts strong pressures on the contrary notion. But still, Pauli identifies herself as both black and white, instead of a human being, a member of the human race.

At the same time, one can argue that this incident and others are a strong characteristic of the book. The Woodson does not force feed us any conclusions as to Maizon's character transformation or race morality, save in the discussion of Maizon's favorite book *The Bluest Eye*. Many conclusions are left to the reader. Both *Bridge to Terabithia* and *Maizon at Blue Hill* have 1st person narratives. It is interesting to note that there is more description of how Maizon feels than how Jess feels. Jess's inner dialogue is what he is thinking. Maizon's inner dialogue is what she is feeling. Of course, there is significant crossover. It is clear that it's easier for girls to relate to Maizon than boys, based on the issues going around like girl's periods and clothes. Many of the exchanges that Maizon contain some passive aggressive comments, something more typical of girls Maizon's age than boys.

Josiah says

"That's what makes best friends. It's not whether or not you live on the same block or go to the same school, but how you feel about each other in your hearts."

—Grandma, "Maizon at Blue Hill", P. 6

This book takes place right in the middle of "Last Summer With Maizon". It's told from the enlightening perspective of Maizon while she is away at the Blue Hill school in Connecticut.

Jacqueline Woodson's powers of emotional perception come through beautifully in the pages and thoughts that comprise this lovely novel. The work of showing the same story from the perspective of a different character is reminiscent of Cynthia Voigt's writing in the *Tillerman Cycle*; both authors are so adroit at re-spinning the tale in such a fascinating and resonant way that the reader will wonder how the story ever could have been complete without the added dimension being told.

"Maizon at Blue Hill" is, in my view, a worthy sequel to a tremendous first book, and Jacqueline Woodson once again does herself proud. The story connects deeply with my own heart and soul and teaches me something new about being human, all while offering a quiet and fresh read, both of which are rare qualities in literature.

"I'm always wondering if he'll return. Sometimes I pray that he doesn't. And sometimes I hope he will. I wish on falling stars and eyelashes. Absence isn't solid the way death is. It's fluid, like language. And it hurts so much...so, so much."

—Maizon, "Maizon at Blue Hill", P. 59

NSAndrew Liebergen says

When Maizon Singh accepts a scholarship to Blue Hill, a prestigious boarding school for girls in Connecticut, her world turns upside down. The Brooklyn girl is unsure how she will fare without her loving grandmother, who raised her, and her best friend, Margaret.

Maizon at Blue Hill is the second offering in a trilogy about the friendship between Margaret and Maizon. This young-adult book examines identity, racism, classism and prejudice as the main character tries to fit in at the nearly all-white school. Jacqueline Woodson's teenage antagonists are obnoxious and unlikable. The white girls look down on Maizon because she is black ("You look like the lady who cleans my family's house. Do you know her?").

The other four black girls at the boarding school are from wealthy families. Though several ridicule Maizon because she is poor and lacks home training, they insist that the race must stick together. At first, Maizon tries to ignore these social challenges by cutting herself off from everyone. But in her loneliness, Maizon decides to return home and "find a place where smart black girls from Brooklyn could feel like they belonged"

Woodson has a knack for drawing characters and writing dialogue that is realistic. Maizon at Blue Hill was originally published in 1993 and will resonate with kids of color in private schools who deal with racism and prejudice every day. Overall, Maizon at Blue Hill is a fast-paced read about a smart kid trying to find her place in the world on her own terms.

Kara Trammell says

WOODSON- Maizon is accepted to a prestigious private school, but that means she has to leave her grandma and her best friend Margaret. It also means that she is entering a predominantly white student body; only five other black girls attend Blue Hill. Acknowledging these struggles, Maizon tries to find her place at Blue Hill while trying to hold on to who she was when she lived at home. Being pushed academically is fine; being pushed socially is another story. Woodson creates an opportunity for all teens to reflect on the importance of good friends and surroundings, as well as the chance for teens to consider what it means to stay true to yourself in times of difficulty. A novel that focuses on the search for identity, Maizon at Blue Hill paints a realistic picture of the struggles that young adults and teenagers have at school and with friends.

Ella Maccallum says

"Maizon at Blue Hill" Was a great book. It's about a girl who has to leave her family in Brooklyn, NY to come to a school called Blue Hill. She meets a bunch of new people, but Maizon doesn't really feel like it's the best school for her. She wants to come back to Brooklyn, but she doesn't want to disappoint her grandmother. Maizon has to choose between her own wishes and the wishes of her family. Oh, and did I mention she is black? She faces racism from a lot of other girls at the school.

I would recommend this book to a friend because it's a great book to see from a girl's perspective, and at the same time, a black's perspective, to see the racism that black people used to face from white people

Abraham says

I love the way that Jacqueline Woodson can create characters that you can picture in your head. They are very human and I find myself visualizing them easily.

I just wish this book were longer! I couldn't believe how short it felt. I was very surprised at how it ended, not just how quickly, but what happened. I guess it's reality, that's how things are...not everybody decides that sticking with it is the best way to go, and I think this book would create rich discussion in a book group. Why does she decide to leave? Is that the best choice? What are her other choices? How do you think this experience has changed her?

Some of the things that the other girls say to Maizon are so cringe-inducing that I was left wondering if they weren't a little exaggerated. But on second thought, yes, some people are that ignorant. I was probably that ignorant about race in America for much of my life. I still am to some degree, and I'm still ignorant about plenty of other things.

Emily Hollander says

Genre: Multicultural

Awards: Open Book Award Nominee

Grade Level: 5-6

This book expresses the importance of finding yourself through difficult situations. Maizon, a young African American girl, enters a private academy where she is a minority. Throughout the story, she struggles to fit in and find her place among people she does not immediately relate to. This story helps students realize that sometimes in order to find ourselves, we must step outside of our comfort zones. For an activity, I would ask my students to write about a time that they felt uncomfortable or afraid but then discovered something good out of that situation. Also, I would have my class share something out loud that they really want to do or accomplish but are afraid to do it. These activities and this book will hopefully motivate them to accomplish anything they set their minds to.

Misael Rosa says

This book is a great book..is about a girl named maizon which at da beginin she was speakin her mind of goods & bass but went to da new high school she was kind of shy..I dislike that when she got to da new school she was shy ..I like day she atleast stay with her head high

Jen says

I liked this book, but I didn't love it. It was definitely realistic fiction, and I definitely liked the main character, Maizon. The only problem for me was that it was a bit difficult to keep track of the characters at the prep school. I also didn't feel the strength of the bond between Maizon and her best friend, which was apparently so tight it made a difference in the path her life took. This was the same problem in If You Come Softly by Woodson. I just can't feel the bond between the characters. Not enough moments in the relationship to reveal it. It's almost like Woodson sacrifices that for brevity. Her books are short at a cost, I think.
