



Title: This is the Rope

Author: Jacqueline Woodson

Illustrator: James Ransome

Themes: Migration, unjust

Hear the book read aloud here: [This is the Rope](#)

★ 2nd Grade Common Core Reading Standard ★

Describe how words and phrases (e.g. regular beats, alliteration, rhyme, repeated lines) supply rhythm and meaning in a story, poem, or song.

I. INTRODUCTION (PREP QUESTIONS)

- Ask students if they have ever jumped rope. Have students suggest other ways that a rope might be used.
- Ask students to share what they remember about a previously-read book called [Fifty Cents and a Dream](#) (Booker T. Washington). Read the dedication of J.W. (**not** the dedication/memory part of J.R.) from this book to the students. Ask students to define **unjust** and to cite examples of what unjust conditions of the south might mean. Tell students that from the early 1900s until the mid 1970s, more than 6 million African Americans moved from the south to cities in the north. This was called the Great Migration. Have students define **migration** using context clues or recognizing the part within the word **immigration**. Tell students that these people moved because they were searching for better jobs, better education, better treatment, and better lives.

II. INTEGRATIVE STRATEGIES

During Reading

- P. 1: Read; have students note details in the illustration to describe the setting (chickens, crops, someone is hanging clothes to dry). Ask students about the connection between the narrator of the story and her grandmother, noting that at this point of the story, the grandmother is only a young girl.
- Reread the last sentence. Ask students what sound they hear the most. Tell students this is an example of **figurative language** called **alliteration** (when two or more words begin with the same sound). Repeat the alliterated words (*skipped, shade, sweet-smelling*).
- Point out the words *back home* and the different print style. Model a think-aloud: "I can tell these two words are going to be important to this story because the author has written them in a different way."
- Pp. 2-3: Read; note rhythmic beat. Point out the **alliteration** in the phrase on p. 2 (*this, the, to, tie, top*). Have students share their observations about the time lapse since p. 1 (grandmother is fully grown, married, has a baby). Have students infer the relationship between the baby and the narrator (narrator's mother).

- Point out that the move from South Carolina to New York City is northerly. Have students predict how the setting of New York City might differ from the setting noted earlier and in this illustration.
- Have students discuss the two different uses of the rope so far.
- Pp. 4-5: Read; discuss setting differences and compare them against their previous predictions above.
- Pp. 6-7: Read; discuss new use of the rope. Point out the occurrence of *back home*, and emphasize the other italicized words. Have students discuss the significance of the words as they contrast the previous rural setting to the city setting. Ask students to infer the meaning of, “*on and on...*”
- Pp. 8-9: Read; discuss new use of the rope. Have students cite the evidence that confirms their previous predictions that the baby must be the narrator’s mother.
- Pp. 10-11: Read; ask students what has changed in the narrator’s description (she is now referring to her mother using the rope rather than her grandmother). Discuss the significance of this (the generational change noting the passage of time). What is the new use of the rope?
- Pp. 12-13: Read: discuss the significance of the words, “...a home of their own that they *finally* owned.” Point out the **alliteration** (*block, Brooklyn block*).
- Pp. 14-15: Read; note significance of the rope’s use (first time her mama tripped). Point out the Miss Lucy jumping chant (it appears again later in the story).
- Pp. 16-17: Read; note the rope’s use.
- Pp. 18-19: Read; note the time lapse (10 years) and have students infer possible reasons why the narrator’s mama might not have used the rope for so many years (older, busy with homework, etc.). Discuss the significance of the grandfather’s italicized text and reference again to *back home*; note new use for the rope.
- Pp. 20-21: Read; discuss the significance of the rope on the piano, winding around the photographs. Ask students why the narrator emphasizes that she was *already reaching* for the rope as a baby (the generational continuum). Have students discuss the significance of the statement, “You want whatever you make or do in your life to last.”
- Pp. 22-23: Read; have students note the generational similarities (mama is turning the jumprope again but now as a mother for her own daughter (the narrator); singing the Miss Lucy chant with her daughter (the narrator).
- Pp. 24-25: Read; note the rope’s use and discuss the significance of, “We Are All Family.”
- Pp. 26-27: Read; have students decide what kind of a word **threadbare** is (**compound**: two little words stuck together to make a bigger word) and define **threadbare**, using the meanings of the two smaller words and context clues. Have students infer why the narrator wanted a brand-new rope (too worn out, not heavy enough to use properly as a jumprope, etc. Point out the connection between the grandmother holding her original rope and the words *back home*.
- Pp. 28: Read; ask students to discuss the significance of, “...her long-ago memory of sweet-smelling pine.” Reread p. 1 for comparison.

III. INTEGRATIVE STRATEGIES

Post Reading

- Why was the rope important? What does it help the family remember?
- Do you think that the rope could have lived and be used for such a long time as this book suggests? Why or why not?

IV. SMALL GROUPS

- Can you remember all the ways the rope was used? Have students think about an item that they own that is special to them. Why is it special? What items might they pass along to future generations?
- Beatrice's grandmother moved from the South Carolina countryside to the big city of Brooklyn, New York. What are some differences between the city and the countryside? How do you think Beatrice's grandmother's life became different when she moved? Students can revisit the illustrations to compare and contrast the rural and city settings. Talk about what it might be like to move and to start a new life in a new place and why.