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Dr. Toughlove's Book Club

By CAROL FRANKS-RANDALL, EdD

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Join Carol Franks-Randall, EdD, retired educator and children's book author, living in Centreville, each month as she writes children's book reviews as Dr. Toughlove, one of the protagonists in her first book, "Jamal and Me." Check out her website at <https://carolfranksrandall.com>.

School has begun for many students, so Dr. Toughlove thought it would be the perfect time to showcase the book "The Day You Begin" written by Jacqueline Woodson and illustrated by Rafael Lopez.

Jacqueline Woodson is a prolific author who has served as the National Ambassador for Young People's Literature. Her books have received awards that include but are not limited to: the Coretta Scott King Award, the National Book Award, the Caldecott Medal and the Newbery Honor Medal.



“The Day You Begin” shines a spotlight on the challenges associated with being the “new kid” at school. It is a touching story about how children feel different from their peers for a variety of reasons and encourages youngsters to be brave enough to share their stories even when they feel like an outsider. Angelina, one of the protagonists in the book says, “There will be times when you walk into a room and no one there is quite like you until the day you begin...to share your stories” (p. 24).

Dr. Toughlove was struck by the lyrical and descriptive language in this book. It is not a rhyming poem – but it almost reads like one. “The Day You Begin” was inspired by a poem written by Jacqueline Woodson in 2014. Rafael Lopez’s illustrations serve to support Jacqueline Woodson’s elegant words with colorful, whimsical illustrations.

As our society begins to resume previous activities or try new ones, it is not uncommon to be the “new kid” and experience trepidation about that experience. “The Day You Begin” tackles this issue with compassion, courage and resolve. One of the themes in the book (there are several) is that everyone is important and has a story to tell about their life experiences that is valuable and should be appreciated. An important lesson for children and adults alike.

“The Day You Begin” can also serve as a springboard to encourage children to talk about times when they were the “new kid” and offer ways to help newcomers feel welcome and included. As is often the case, the children who listen to this book read aloud or who read it themselves will come up with perspectives and ideas that we grown-ups have never thought of.



“The Day You Begin” is a great book for kids aged 5-8, and is available at the Queen Anne’s County Library.

