



**Title:** Red at the Bone

**Author:** Jacqueline Woodson

**Imprint:** Riverhead

**Publisher:** Penguin Publishing Group

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## BOOK RESUME: RED AT THE BONE

### BOOK SYNOPSIS

Moving forward and backward in time, Jacqueline Woodson's taut and powerful novel uncovers the role that history and community have played in the experiences, decisions, and relationships of these families, and in the life of the new child.

As the book opens in 2001, it is the evening of sixteen-year-old Melody's coming of age ceremony in her grandparents' Brooklyn brownstone. Watched lovingly by her relatives and friends, making her entrance to the music of Prince, she wears a special custom-made dress. But the event is not without poignancy. Sixteen years earlier, that very dress was measured and sewn for a different wearer: Melody's mother, for her own ceremony—a celebration that ultimately never took place.

Unfurling the history of Melody's family—reaching back to the Tulsa race massacre in 1921—to show how they all arrived at this moment, Woodson considers not just their ambitions and successes but also the costs, the tolls they've paid for striving to overcome expectations and escape the pull of history. As it explores sexual desire and identity, ambition, gentrification, education, class and status, and the life-altering facts of parenthood, *Red at the Bone* most strikingly looks at the ways in which young people must so often make long-lasting decisions about their lives—even before they have begun to figure out who they are and what they want to be.

### REVIEWS AND PRAISE

"Readers mourning the death of Toni Morrison will find comfort in Sabe's magnificent cadences as she rues her daughter's teen pregnancy, which flies in the face of the lessons her mama ingrained in her from the Tulsa race riots of 1921—the massacre by whites that drove her family north and taught them to vigilantly safeguard their social and economic gains. . . . With *Red at the Bone*, Jacqueline Woodson has indeed risen—even further into the ranks of great literature." —NPR

"Occasionally mentioned, and never forgotten, is the fact that Iris's family moved to Brooklyn from the South in 1921 after white people in Tulsa burned down black people's schools, restaurants and beauty shops. It's not just that the past informs the present, nor is it just that the past isn't past; it's also the case that the past has to be remembered, has to be kept alive." —*The New York Times*

"A true spell of a book, Woodson is one of those rare writers who make you feel like you can do anything, should do anything. The story of family and young love are timeless human stories—but through Woodson's sentences, this novel offers us new ways to think and embody our burning world and, perhaps most

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mercifully, permission to dream—and to change.” —Ocean Vuong, *New York Times* bestselling author of *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*

#### **MEDIA AND RESOURCES**

- [Reading Guide](#)
- [Red at the Bone by Jacqueline Woodson: A Study Guide](#)
- [Red at the Bone Discussion Guide](#)

#### **RESPONSE TO CHALLENGES**

- [Authors Criticize School District For Banned Books](#) (2021)
- [Authors Guild Launches a Banned Book Club](#) (2022)

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