

A WORLD PREMIERE KENNEDY CENTER CO-COMMISSION
WITH THE ORLANDO REPERTORY THEATRE

Locomotion

ADAPTED BY JACQUELINE WOODSON FROM HER BOOK *LOCOMOTION*

DIRECTED BY JENNIFER L. NELSON

Performances for Young Audiences
is made possible by



A Life Changed

Meet Lonnie: What's his story?

Something is up with this kid, Lonnie. He lives with a foster mom and never talks about what happened to his real family.

His teacher, Ms. Marcus, has everyone writing in journals. Lonnie is the only one who seems to like it. He left his journal on his desk. Inside, he had written:

Once we were real.

"Once we were real?" What does that mean?

How Lonnie Got His Name

Lonnie says his parents named him Lonnie Collins Motion—or "Lo-Co-Motion" for short. "LOCOMOTION" was a 1962 rock and roll hit song that made his mom happy whenever she heard it.

*Everybody's doing a brand new dance now!
C'mon, baby, do the locomotion!*

Forever

How You Got Your Name

Write how you got your name in the lines below. Were you named after someone? Is it a name your parents made up? Did it come from a book? What does your name mean? Is there a story behind your name? Do you have a nickname? Is it a nickname you can't stand? What's the story behind your nickname?



HOW I GOT MY NAME


TRANSformat

Meet the teacher: Ms. Marcus


Ms. Marcus says everything changes. She says, "Fourth grade is different than first" because we're not little kids anymore. Ms. Marcus says we change so fast she could watch it happen except she works too hard to notice. She says people change *all the time*.

Lonnie changes during the play. Watch him closely and you can see it happen.

Theatrical Tricks



Locomotion is a "memory play" which means scenes jump forward in time or "flash back" to the past. On stage, change happens *fast*, as quick as a memory flashes into your head. Be prepared for *transformations* on stage that happen quickly.



The actors in *Locomotion* play more than one character. Sometimes they are younger and older versions of the same person. You'll see actors *transform* into other people by how they speak, move, and even dress.

The locations in *Locomotion* change, too. Watch how the stage *transforms* into different places—a classroom, a schoolyard, a house—and switches from past to present and back to past. Pay close attention to how the furniture, lights, and sounds work together to create a new time and space for all the various scenes.

Sometimes an actor *transforms* his focus by talking directly to the audience instead of the other actors. The actor is still "in the play," pretending the audience is not there. Often during the play, we see how Lonnie speaks in the direction of the audience, while imagining no one is there. (When an actor talks directly to the audience, it is usually *not* an invitation to talk back to the actor.)

10 THINGS CHANGE

Loose Change

Everybody goes through change. What are some big changes in your life? Getting eyeglasses or braces—or starting at a new school? Maybe it was a big change in your family. Write down what it was and describe how you felt *before* and what you felt that was *different* afterward.



A CHANGE IN MY LIFE

Expression

SHOW YOUR STUFF

Meet Enrique

Enrique and Lonnie are friends because they sit together in class. Other than that, you'd never expect them to be friends because Enrique *expresses* himself by singing gospel and hip hop music, and Lonnie *expresses* himself by writing poems in his journal.

Just Write It

Ms. Marcus has her students write poetry. "It's your life. Write it anyway you want, for you," she says. "Whatever comes to you, however it comes to you. Just write it."

Lonnie's Language

Lonnie writes "free verse," a form of poetry that frees itself from rhythm and rhyme and allows words to flow on their own. Whether a poem rhymes or not, it still has to say something.

Seven Simple Words

In seven words, Enrique sums up his life:


"I want more baccalaitos. I hate poetry."

WHAT IS YOUR LIFE
IN SEVEN WORDS?



The Rewind Button

Lonnie says:

“Writing makes me remember... like
somebody pushed the Rewind button.” 

Push the rewind button on your life. Think back to a “perfect moment.”
Make a list of all the things in that moment and how you felt. Weave those
words together into a poem. Bring your perfect moment back to life.



MY PERFECT MOMENT 

Meet Miss Edna

Lonnie's foster mom, Miss Edna, *adapts* to a new situation when she accepts a foster child in her house. "We need to figure out how this is going to work," she says to Lonnie, "the two of us living here..." She also *adapts* to life with her own son in the military overseas.

Lonnie must *adapt* to life with Miss Edna, Ms. Marcus, and Enrique. He must also *adapt* to life without his real family.

Audi

"Once we were real."

What Is Real?

"Real life," says Ms. Marcus is "the stuff that happened to you." But different stuff happens to different people. Fill in the following blanks and write down what is real for you. And use describers!



MY REAL LIFE

MY HOME IS:

MY FAMILY IS:

THE PERSON WHO TAKES CARE OF ME IS:

I EXPRESS MYSELF BY:

A REAL POET IS:

adaptation

MAKE IT WORK

What Makes a Family?

When parents or other family members are not able to take care of their children, the state places the child in a household within the foster care system. Foster parents take care of a child's daily well-being and offer support and affection. In the play, Lonnie and his sister Lili live in separate foster homes and each must learn to *adapt* to their new surroundings.

A "traditional" family in America used to be made up of a mom, a dad, and kids. Today, "non-traditional" families are much more common. Children might be raised by a single mom or dad, grandparents, two moms, or two dads. Some families are led by a bi-racial couple. A family can also include stepparents and half-siblings. Regardless, a family is still a close unit of loved ones under the same roof.



From Page to

Meet the Playwright: Jacqueline Woodson



When Jacqueline Woodson was in the fifth grade, she wrote a poem about Martin Luther King Jr. that was so good no one believed she actually wrote it, including her teacher. (Sound familiar? The same thing happens to Lonnie!) Finally, everyone believed young Jacqueline authored the poem. And when it was submitted to a poetry writing contest, Jacqueline won a Scrabble game!

Ms. Woodson is an award-winning author of books for children and young adults. Go to the library and search for her books on the shelves. She currently lives in Brooklyn, New York.

Based on the book

Ms. Woodson *adapted* this stage play version of *Locomotion* from her novel of the same name. The book is actually a series of poems written by "Lonnie."

If you read the book, you'll notice that a new character, Enrique, was created for the stage version. Other book characters never show up in the stage adaptation at all. And Ms. Marcus and Miss Edna might seem differently than they do in the book. The reason is a story works differently onstage than it does on a page. Authors write books for a reader sitting alone. Playwrights write stories for actors to perform before a live audience. Since Ms. Woodson wrote both the book and the play, she knows the characters and her story best!

Stage

Adapt It!

Read this poem from the novel *Locomotion* and imagine how you would bring it to life on stage. Describe your ideas below. Then watch how Ms. Woodson handles the same moment when you attend the performance of *Locomotion*.

ROOF

At night sometimes after Miss Edna goes to bed I go
up on the roof

Sometimes I sit counting the stars

Maybe one is my mama and

another one is my daddy And maybe that's why

sometimes they flicker a bit

I mean *the stars* flicker

MY IDEAS 



THINGS TO DO BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

BEFORE: • Read this *Cuesheet*.

- Turn off your cell phones. Remind adults to turn them off, too.
- Put away wrapped candy. (The crinkle can ruin a performance.)
- Say what's on your mind to anyone sitting with you so you can stop talking and stay quiet during the play.

DURING: • Respect the performers.

- It's okay to laugh and applaud, but only when the actors expect it.
- Respect the person in front of you. Don't kick his or her chair.
- Respect the person behind you. Don't flop around too much or talk to your neighbor.
- Have a good time!

AFTER: • Work on the exercises in this guide.

- Talk about your impressions of the play with other people who saw it.
- Describe the performance to someone who didn't see it.

The World According to Me

Use this journal as a model to *start your own journal!* Grab a spare notebook and get started! Decorate it with photos, cartoons, or stickers—but most importantly, *write in it*. Write poems, plays, or paragraphs! Record your thoughts, feelings, memories, and future plans!

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ARTSEGE

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