

LOVELY ONE



#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

**KETANJI BROWN
JACKSON**

A MEMOIR ADAPTED FOR YOUNG ADULTS

EDUCATORS' GUIDE

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ABOUT THE BOOK

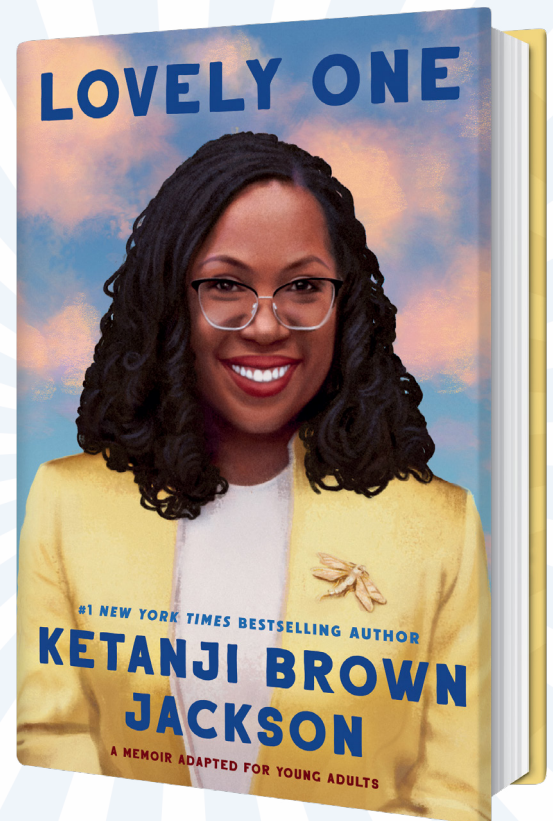
The *New York Times* bestselling memoir has now been adapted for young adults! Ketanji Brown Jackson, the first Black woman to ever be appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court, chronicles her life story and her extraordinary path to becoming a jurist on America's highest court in this inspiring, intimate memoir.

Growing up, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson's parents taught her that she could achieve anything she wanted, and be whoever she wanted to be. In high school, she dreamt of being a Supreme Court judge. In 2022, her dream came true: She was sworn in as the first African American woman judge.

Lovely One is Justice Jackson's journey to making her dreams a reality, the hurdles she faced and the lessons she learned along the way. She recalls feeling different and lonely as one of the few Black kids at her high school. At Harvard University, she was homesick and grappled with imposter syndrome. She took on the difficulties of working in the legal field as a Black woman, and the challenges of balancing a career and relationships.

But Justice Jackson persevered. She found like-minded people at her high school's speech club and in Harvard's musical theater group. With support from her family and strength from friends, she took on the world with optimism, determination, and hard work. Justice Jackson's story will resonate with dreamers everywhere, spreading hope and inspiration for generations to come.

This young adult adaptation has a brand-new preface and epilogue and includes an exclusive prize-winning speech the justice delivered as a high school student.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



▲ "A preschool portrait of me at age two."



▲ "Soon after I was born, my dad, who had helped to develop the Black Studies curriculum for his DC school district, began thinking about going back to school to study law."



▲ "Grandma Euzera and me in 1971."

Ketanji Brown Jackson was born in Washington, D.C., and grew up in Miami, Florida. She received her undergraduate and law degrees, both with honors, from Harvard University, then served as a law clerk for three federal judges, including Associate Justice Stephen G. Breyer of the Supreme Court of the United States. Jackson subsequently practiced law in the private sector, worked as an attorney, and served as an assistant federal public defender, and later as vice chair at the U.S. Sentencing Commission. In 2013, President Barack Obama appointed Jackson to the

U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. Elevated to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit in 2021, Jackson made history in 2022 when President Joseph Biden nominated her as an associate justice. The first Black woman ever confirmed to the Supreme Court of the United States, she took her seat on June 30, 2022.

PRAISE FOR THE BOOK

“Self-aware and sincere; a tribute to authenticity, integrity, and faith in a profound vision.”

—Kirkus Reviews

“Jackson’s memoir will make an excellent impression on students finding their place in the world.”

—Booklist



Photo: Author's collection

▲ “My parents, who were the first generation in their families to earn college degrees, graduated from historically Black colleges. They started married life as teachers in Washington, DC, where I was born in 1970.”

NOTE TO TEACHERS

Lovely One is an adaptation for young adults of Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson’s memoir by the same title.

Readers are invited into Justice Jackson’s life, learning about her cultural identity, background, family, career, and ascent to the Supreme Court. Before students read and discuss *Lovely One*, the following prereading actions are recommended.

Memoir and Autobiography: Provide students with a foundation for reading memoir. Memoir and autobiography are often used interchangeably; help students develop an understanding of their commonalities and distinctions. Memoirs and autobiographies are works of narrative nonfiction that are written in the first person using the pronouns “I” and “me.” Authors of memoirs share their memories across a specific time period in ways that enable them to reflect on recurring themes throughout their life. A memoir addresses the significance of these experiences and how the author is changed because of them. An autobiography is a factual, historical, and chronological account of the author’s life.

Language and Racial Identity: Racial identity, specifically Black and African American identities are personal, complex, and nuanced. Justice Jackson writes, “Today, the terms ‘Black American,’ ‘African American,’ and ‘Black’ are preferable when speaking of people of African descent in the United States. In this book, I use them interchangeably. I also sometimes use the words ‘Negro’ and ‘Colored’ in their historical context, reflecting the time periods and places referred to when these terms appear” (p.4). While the terms Black and African American are often used interchangeably, Black people exist all over the world and therefore Black does not always mean African American. Discuss with students that Black and African American are used to refer to people born in the United States who are most likely descendants from

enslaved Africans. Again, it is important to note that racial identity is personal and nuanced. For a variety of complex reasons, some people prefer one term over another or identity as both.

Protocols for Discussions About Race and Racism: There has been a legacy of not discussing race and racism beyond superficial and often limited narratives in K–12 schooling in the United States. Therefore, educators can anticipate that they, as well as their students, will benefit from putting supports in place for having challenging and courageous conversations about race. Establishing community agreements and guidelines is a powerful way to support whole class and student-led group discussions of *Lovely One*. The following resources provide options for putting these protocols in place.

- Learning for Justice: [“Let’s Talk! Discussing Race, Racism, and Other Difficult Topics with Students”](#)
- Facing History and Ourselves: Tips for developing classroom [contracts and norms](#)
- National Education Association: [10 Principles for Talking About Race in Schools](#)

You might decide to construct classroom community agreements with your students, reminding them that a shorter and more meaningful set of norms will be easier to remember and commit to than a long list of ideas. You might also consider the power and purpose of creating a professional learning community with colleagues to read a text like [Courageous Conversations About Race](#) by Glenn Singleton. A commitment of this nature can help an entire school have productive conversations about race.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Epigraphs

An epigraph is a short statement that is included at the beginning of a novel, chapter, or section. It could be a sentence, a paragraph, or even a poem. The words of an epigraph are written by someone other than the author of the book.

Lovely One is divided into two parts. Part one begins with an excerpt from a poem: “Testimonial” by Pulitzer Prize-winning poet and essayist Rita Dove who was the first Black woman U.S. Poet Laureate. Part two begins with an excerpt from the novel *Parable of the Sower* by Octavia E. Butler, one of the first Black women science fiction and speculative fiction writers; she is widely considered one of the greatest American authors of the twentieth century.

- What impression or insights do these epigraphs give you about Justice Jackson?
- How do they help you to anticipate what may unfold in the writing that follows?

Identity

Readers learn about Justice Jackson’s background and upbringing, as well as the sociopolitical and economic factors that have shaped who she is today. As she processes who family, friends, mentors, and colleagues say she is and how these perspectives align or contradict, she ultimately answers the question “Who am I?” for herself and determines her own identity. Consider the ways Justice Jackson’s identity develops and deepens.

- How did her parents and grandparents navigate conditions designed to limit their lives?
- How did the Black communities she and her family lived in provide a haven that sustained them and helped them define for themselves who they are despite the racist, White supremacist environment around them?
- In what ways does the justice’s name and its meaning, her African heritage, and her upbringing influence her throughout her life?
- How does legalized slavery, legally enforced racial segregation such as Black codes, Supreme Court statutes, and other state-sanctioned forms of racial segregation impact the identity of Black people in the United States? How does this history and its legacy today shape Justice Jackson’s identity?



▲ “Patrick and I got engaged a few months before he graduated from medical school in 1995.”

- What are some of the familial, societal, and personal forces that compelled Justice Jackson to succeed academically? How does education shape her identity?

Double Consciousness

Double consciousness, a term coined by civil rights activist, author, and sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois, describes the psychological burden of the dual awareness of Black people as they navigate their own identity while also viewing themselves through the racialized perception of others in an oppressive, White-dominated society. As a result, individuals experience two conflicting identities: one that desires full acceptance in mainstream society and another that is mindful of racial stereotypes and prejudices.

- Identify times in Justice Jackson’s life as a child, college student, and in various times throughout her career where the concept of double consciousness emerges.
- What patterns do you notice?
- How does Jackson navigate these two conflicting identities—one that possesses an intrinsic belief in her own value and desires full acceptance in mainstream society, and another that recognizes racial stereotypes and prejudices?
- What pressures does this create in her life? How does her strong sense of self-worth and deep connections to her cultural heritage anchor her?

Mentors

Family members, teachers, friends, lawyers, judges, and others, including people she never met such as Constance Baker Motley, have each played a significant role in Justice Jackson’s life and her pathway to becoming a Supreme Court justice.

- Identify five people that mentored Justice Jackson. Describe her relationship with them.
- How did these mentors shape her relationship with the law and her career as a lawyer?
- How do they inform her work as a Supreme Court justice?



▲ “My first clerkship after law school was with Judge Patti Saris, who became a mentor and dear friend.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (Continue)

Mantras

Across her life, several mantras have sustained Justice Jackson and helped strengthen her resolve to persevere. Her mother says, “Guard your spirit, Ketanji. To dwell on the unfairness of life is to be devoured by it” (p. 83–84); and “You’ve got this. This thing has been done before, so you can do it, too” (p. 106). Aunt Carolynn says, “Remember you have not gone out of this world” (p. 108). Grandma Euzera says, “Never forget you are a blessed child” (p. 109).

- Discuss what it means to be resilient and why resilience was necessary for Justice Jackson to achieve her goals.
- What were the psychological and emotional obstacles Jackson had to navigate throughout her life, and how did these mantras help her get through them?

Beloved Community

Justice Jackson writes, “My friends and I had come to Harvard and found our tribe. So in addition to going to class and studying, we were actively creating rituals to sustain ourselves and one another” (p. 127).

- In what ways was Harvard similar to and different from her previous academic spaces?
- Discuss some of the rituals Justice Jackson and her peers created.
- Why was it essential for her to cultivate a beloved community for herself and her Black friends?



Photos: Author's collection

▲ “Starting as a ninth grader, I competed as part of Miami Palmetto Senior High School’s speech and debate team. Our dedicated debate coach, Francine Berger, in black-and-white photo, became a defining influence in my life.”



Racial Consciousness

Justice Jackson’s childhood, adulthood, professional and personal relationships are all marked by moments that opened her eyes about racism in the United States. For example, when reflecting on experiences from high school, she shares, “It was around this time that I developed my preferred way of dealing with race-related life challenges over which I could exert no control. While I recognized that the way my White friends and I moved through the world was not the same at all, I refused to let that seep into my psyche and destroy my sense of self-worth. Of course, such equanimity was more difficult to achieve early on than it would be as I grew older” (p. 81). Discuss moments across Justice Jackson’s personal and professional life that raised her consciousness about race and racism and informed the ways she responds.

- Identify and discuss moments when she resisted internalized racism.
- Identify and discuss times when she navigated interpersonal racism in academic and professional spaces.
- Identify and discuss how she became conscious of institutional racism.
- How does her awareness of racial injustice and other inequities in the United States influence her work ethic and feelings about the law?
- What do her relationships with White friends help her to understand about race? What does it help them to understand about race?
- What concerns or complications did Justice Jackson and her husband, Dr. Jackson, experience as an interracial couple and how do they address this?



Photos: Author's collection

▲ “A few weeks before my own nuptials, I attended the Chicago wedding of my friends Denise and Bernard Loyd, and met Barack Obama, the first Black president of *Harvard Law Review*, and his wife, Michelle, also a Harvard Law alum.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (Continue)

Motherhood

Becoming a mother is a major turning point in Justice Jackson's life. Being devoted to her family as well as the law caused many moments where juggling motherhood and career felt overwhelming.



▲ "This photo of Leila, looking on with pride as I responded to questions during my Supreme Court confirmation hearing in March 2022, went viral."

- What are some of the particular challenges women face as they work in the field of law?
- What is notable from Justice Jackson's experiences and the research she shares about how these challenges are different for Black women and other women of color?
- How does she navigate these challenges?
- What patriarchal systems exist in society that prevent working fathers from experiencing these issues?
- What societal changes are needed to support working mothers?

(Un)equal Protection Under the Law

The maxim "justice is blind" is used to declare that every citizen has equal protection under the law. Yet, throughout her career as a lawyer, Justice Jackson spotlights disparities that call this expression into question.

- How was the summer she spent working in New York City at NDS (Neighborhood Defender Service) a turning point that raised her awareness of the ways the law not only helps but harms? How did Jackson respond to this discovery?
- Explore in depth one issue from the text that demonstrates that justice is not blind.
- How does having an incarcerated relative challenge and change Justice Jackson's ideas about the law?
- Consider the jobs held by the justice up to and including becoming a Supreme Court justice. What did she learn from each position? How did each help her develop the skills she'd need as a justice and to address disparities in the law?

Cultivating Dreams

Lovely One is a memoir that teaches us the importance of dreams. Justice Jackson shares that as a young person, she named, protected, and cultivated her dream of becoming a Supreme Court justice and was able to achieve her goal. Justice Jackson's life is a testament to dreams being essential to living a fulfilling, joyful life on one's own terms. Consider the various steps Justice Jackson took to accomplish her lifelong dream. Reflect on the following questions and how you might nurture your own dreams.

- What are your dreams for yourself and how are you working toward accomplishing them? Write a very loose ten-step plan to get you closer to your dream.
- When life takes an unexpected turn, how do you handle it and continue to hold on to your dreams?
- If you feel stuck, what changes can you make in your life to get back on track?
- What does success look like for you? How do you define and recognize success? What roles does happiness play in your definition of success?
- How do your relationships (family, mentors, friends, partners) help you to work toward your vision? Are there other people who could help support your dreams? How can you foster relationships with them?

If you're not yet sure what your dreams are:

- What's something you've always wanted to do but never tried?
- What topics or subjects at school energize or excite you?
- What kind of changes would you like to see in the world?
- What do you want to do as an adult? What kind of work do you think you might enjoy? What problems would you like to solve, and what impact do you want to have on your community?
- Who can you ask for help?



▲ "Talia Aenzi joined our family in January 2001. A few months later, the Browns and the Jacksons celebrated her baptism."

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Lovely One presents many opportunities for further research and reflection. Students can be encouraged to explore the following topics and share their findings and understandings in multimedia presentations of their choice.

The Negro Motorist Green Book

Justice Jackson writes, “In 1936, a guide called the Negro Motorist Green Book would be published by a postal service worker from Harlem named Victor Hugo Green, who understood the need for Black travelers to be able to identify guesthouses, eating establishments, gas stations, drugstores, and barbershops that were hospitable to African Americans, whose lives might otherwise be endangered” (p. 11). Justice Jackson shares that she first learned about this guide in college, which brought a heightened level of understanding about the challenges her grandfather faced as a chauffeur for a White family in Georgia during the time of Jim Crow laws.

- Explore this virtual Smithsonian exhibit to learn more about The Negro Motorist Green Book. negromotoristgreenbook.si.edu/virtual-exhibit/the-green-book. What do you learn about the resilience of Black people?
- What are you learning about the social, political, and economic conditions in the United States that have forced Black people to be resilient?



“On June 30, 2022, I recited the Constitutional Oath, as administered by Chief Justice John Roberts. My husband, Patrick, held the two Bibles on which I swore my oath.”

Broadway Bound

In *Lovely One*, Justice Jackson reveals that she had two lifelong dreams—becoming a Supreme Court justice and performing on Broadway. Across her memoir she demonstrates that passion and profession do not have to be separate and ways she found to nurture both.

- What does she learn from theater that continues to help her as a justice?
- Research how Justice Jackson made her Broadway debut on December 14, 2024, in the musical *& Juliet*.
- What can readers learn about the intersection of academics and the arts?

Dissents

Dissents are opinions submitted by Supreme Court justices who disagree with a majority ruling. They reflect a justice’s differing legal interpretations and philosophies.

- Research and read one of Justice Jackson’s dissents. What does she argue sparks this difference in opinion?
- Why are dissents an important platform for Supreme Court justices to voice their objections?
- What role do dissents play in influencing laws?
- What role do dissents play in influencing the public’s understanding of the Constitution?

About the Guide Writer

Dr. Sonja Cherry Paul is the founder of Red Clay Educators. She adapted the #1 *New York Times* bestseller *Stamped (For Kids)*, and is the author of several books for educators to support reading and writing instruction. An educator with more than twenty years of classroom experience, she has developed curriculum that centers the work of racial literacy in K–12 schools.

She is codirector of the Institute for Racial Equity in Literacy, codirector of the Teach Black History All Year Institute, and executive producer and host of The Black Creators Series, an education-focused content platform that highlights the work of Black authors and illustrators. Sonja provides professional development for schools and organizations on advancing the work of antiracism. Her forthcoming book is *Antiracist Reading Revolution: A Framework for Teaching Beyond Representation Toward Liberation*, published by Corwin (spring 2024).

Follow Sonja on social media (@SonjaCherryPaul and @RedClayEd) and visit her website.



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