

**"My soul has grown deep like the rivers": Oral traditions Jacqueline Woodson's *brown girl dreaming***

Jacqueline Woodson's *brown girl dreaming* is a continuation of oral traditions that survived the perilous voyage across oceans from traditional Africa to America. Woodson's story is steeped in voices of her ancestry. There are many features of African American oral traditions, but the overall concept focuses on community: group identification through gatekeeping, through the tropes of signifyin, testifyin, and call and response; individual actualization through group participation; and acknowledgement of ancestors by building on their foundations, through improvisation. Woodson's use of oral traditions connects her and her readers to the history and cultural African America. She is continuing a conversation that began when an enslaved African said, "Let me tell you a story."