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Jabberwalking is a writing guide that encourages writers to get out into the blue-cheesy world, to open themselves to all they see and experience, and to let go of conventions in order to tap into the pure creativity of their “**BURRITO-SIZE JABBER HEAD!**” In addition to instructions on Jabberwalking (“walk and scribble your burbles, amble, roam, flap your arms”), former U.S. Poet Laureate Juan Felipe Herrera teaches Jabber Walkers how to choose readable bits of their Jabber burbles to craft into free-form (“not even . . . **typical**”) poems. (Reminder: “Jabberwalking is not for the neat, polished, well-combed aesthete.”)

Jabberwalking is infectious. It is everything it encourages writers to be—free-form, rule-breaking, energetic, alive, and wild. It is also part autobiography, with vignettes woven throughout that celebrate the rise of the son of migrant farm workers to the position of U.S. Poet Laureate. Herrera also pays tribute to teachers who believed in and inspired him: Mrs. Sampson in third grade, Mr. Sayden in sixth grade, Mr. Headrich in high-school art.



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About the Book

A Jabber Walker is “a bonified poet on the tangly streets of the planet where human beings breathe as best as they can and slap their hands in the air to greet the sun where periods and dashes and verbs and nouns come flying.” Jabberwalking is a thing to do—“write & walk & write & walk”—as well as a way to be: “to write and become a speaker for others. A poet with the ‘eyes of flame.’”



Common Core Connections

There is nothing COMMON about this book. Nevertheless, at its CORE, it is a joyous celebration of a (Jabberwalking) writerly life. Therefore, this teachers' guide provides connections to the Common Core, along with a variety of ways for students in grades 5–8 to Jabber Walk, to discover their “eyes of flame,” and to tease poems out of their “Jabberjungle of scribbles.”

Prereading Activities

The middle stanza of “Jabberwocky” by Lewis Carroll appears between the dedication page and The Incredible Chapter Uno. Before you and your students dive in to the “hefty, blue-cheesy, puffy surprises” in *Jabberwalking*, loosen up your “burrito-head” by reading “Jabberwocky” in its entirety. First read it to yourself, then read it to your students. Have your students read it to one another, and let them go online to watch other students read it in Poetry Out Loud competitions. Herrera’s “Jabberwalking,” “eyes of flame,” and “burbling” come directly from Carroll’s poem.

In a Jabber Notebook entry on page 116, Herrera pays tribute to his high-school art teacher, to the artist Salvador Dalí, and to surrealism. Choose a few age-appropriate Dalí paintings to show to your students so they can see what surrealism looks like in art before they attempt it with their Jabberwalking burbles.

Discussion Questions

During or after reading *Jabberwalking*, use these questions for classroom discussions or writing prompts.

1. “Where do you love to walk? Where do you feel megalicious happiness? Where do you really feel superb and super-ready and galactically free—you!” (page 12)
2. Throughout *Jabberwalking*, his Chinese pit bull shar-pei, Lotus, accompanies Juan Felipe Herrera. Talk about the pets you have (or wish you had).
3. In his Jabber Notebook on page 58, Herrera writes that his mother’s photo album, filled with “black & whites from the 1800s,” “sparked my brains.” He even developed film in his bathtub! In what ways is photography important to you?
4. Juan Felipe Herrera didn’t have a particularly easy childhood, yet he is able to look back and see that every experience made him the poet he is today. What experiences have made you who you are today?
5. Herrera encourages us “to step up to courage. To write and become a speaker for others. A poet with the ‘eyes of flame’” (page 3). For whom will you become a speaker? Who needs your courage and “eyes of flame”?
6. Which of Herrera’s invented words are your favorites?
7. In what ways does Juan Felipe Herrera inspire you?

Classroom Extensions

Writing

1. Take your class Jabberwalking inside or outside the school. (For instructions, refer to page 2 and chapters two, three, and four.) Then make your Jabberwalking notes into something. (For instructions, see chapters seven and eight.) Create a Jabberwalk Path and Map on your school grounds, with Jabberscribble Sharing Stations.
Writing: Range of Writing W.5–8.10
2. Have your students Jabberwalk at their desks. (For inspiration, see pages 23–29.) *Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge W.5–8.7, 5–8.8; Range of Writing W.5–8.10*

3. Create a Jabberwalking Word Invention Exhibit. *Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use L.5–8.5*
4. Have your students write family stories that pay tribute to people and events that have made them who they are. (See Jabber Notebooks on pages 58, 76, and 97 for mentor texts.) *Writing: Text Types and Purposes W.5–8.3; Research to Build and Present Knowledge W.5–8.7, 5–8.8*
5. Encourage your students to write about teachers who have inspired them. (See Jabber Notebooks on pages 78 and 116–117 for mentor texts.) *Writing: Text Types and Purposes W.5–8.3; Research to Build and Present Knowledge W.5–8.7, 5–8.8*

Reading

Have your students Jabberwalk all over a news article or blog post (similar to blackout poetry) to create something new. (See pages 79 and 87–88 for mentor texts.) *Reading: Informational Text: Key Ideas and Details RI.5–8.2, 5–8.3; Craft and Structure RI.5–8.4, 5–8.5, 5–8.6*

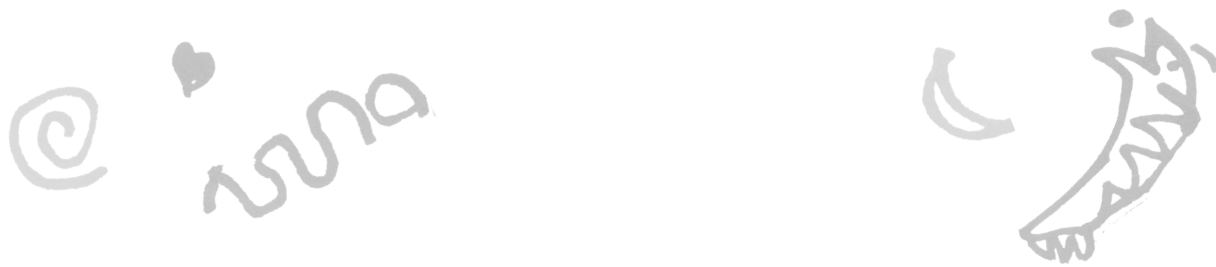
Speaking

Host an Open Microphone Poetry Café so your students can perform their Jabberwalking poems.

Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration SL.5–8.1

Integrating

1. “Writing saved my life. . . . Jabberwalking was made of—kindness, I discovered. To walk and speak for the lives of others became my deeper mission” (pages 127–128). Use *Jabberwalking* for kindness and to speak for the lives of others. Combine the writing created through Jabberwalking with social action projects your class or school are involved in. If this is not already in your curriculum, consider anti-bullying, help for the homeless, care for the environment, or other projects that allow students to speak for the lives of others not just with their words, but with their actions. *Reading: Informational Text: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas RI.5–8.7*
2. Visit the Library of Congress website to learn about past Poets Laureate and the programs they designed to expand the reach of poetry. Have students write short paragraphs in their own words to describe the different programs. *Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge W.3–8.7*
3. Design your own programs to promote poetry throughout the school: add the reading of a poem to the daily announcements; copy poems, mount them on bright paper, and post them in high-traffic areas such as the water fountains or the cafeteria; start a poetry club for reading and writing poetry; read a poem at the beginning of every staff meeting. Have your students elect four Jabberwalking Laureates each semester to spread the Jabberwalking Blue-Cheesy Techniques. *Reading: Informational Text: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas RI.5–8.7*



About the Author



Juan Felipe Herrera is a poet, performance artist, and activist. The son of migrant farmworkers, he was the first Mexican-American U.S. Poet Laureate, serving from 2015–2017. He has published more than a dozen collections of poetry, in addition to short stories, young adult novels, and children's literature. Juan Felipe Herrera lives in California.

Mary Lee Hahn, a teacher-poet who practices her crafts in central Ohio, wrote this guide.

Don't miss Juan Felipe Herrera's upcoming title



HC: 978-0-7636-9052-6 • \$16.99 (\$22.99 CAN)

A buoyant, breathtaking poem from Juan Felipe Herrera—brilliantly illustrated by Caldecott Honoree Lauren Castillo—speaks to every dreaming heart.

Have you ever imagined what you might be when you grow up? When he was very young, Juan Felipe Herrera picked chamomile flowers in windy fields and let tadpoles swim across his hands in a creek. He slept outside and learned to say good-bye to his amiguitos each time his family moved to a new town. He went to school and taught himself to read and write English and filled paper pads with rivers of ink as he walked down the street after school. And when he grew up, he became the United States Poet Laureate and read his poems aloud on the steps of the Library of Congress. If he could do all of that . . . what could you do? With this illustrated poem of endless possibility, Juan Felipe Herrera and Lauren Castillo breathe magic into the hopes and dreams of readers searching for their place in life.

Lauren Castillo has illustrated many books for children, including *Happy Like Soccer* by Maribeth Boelts and *Yard Sale* by Eve Bunting. Lauren Castillo is also the author-illustrator of the Caldecott Honor-winning book *Nana in the City*. She lives in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

