

"A bird is known by its song."
Juan Felipe Herrera



Crashboomlove

Juan Felipe Herrera
University of New Mexico Press 1999

Grade Levels

9-12

Curriculum Area

Language Arts • Social Studies

National Language Arts Standards

NL-ENG.K-12.8

DEVELOPING RESEARCH SKILLS

Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

National Social Studies Standards

NSS-G.K-12.2 PLACES AND REGIONS

Students should understand how culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions.

Objectives

To provide a range of culturally diverse literature meeting students' needs to understand themselves, understand worldviews and other cultures.

To provide meaningful, authentic opportunities to read vocabulary in a variety of contexts; language in a cultural context.

Overview

A carefully crafted, hard-hitting novel composed of a series of prose poems is written in the voice of 16-year-old César García. As a working-class Chicano teen, sensitive to the inequities he sees on a daily basis, César struggles -- not always successfully -- to resist the sort of peer pressure that defines

adolescence. But like most teens, he wants to be accepted by his friends, even though they are on a path of self-destruction. Eventually César finds the strength to refuse to let others define him, which will ultimately be the key to his successful passage into adulthood. Herrera's inventive use of language uses beautiful imagery that holds true to adolescent experience. This powerful novel will especially resonate with teens who feel they don't belong, no matter who or where they are.

Author Background

Juan Felipe Herrera holds the Tomás Rivera Endowed, Chair at the University of California Riverside. During the last three decades Professor Herrera has received numerous awards and fellowships including various National Endowment for the Arts Writers' Fellowships, four California Arts Council grants, the UC Berkeley Regent's Fellowship, the Breadloaf Fellowship in Poetry, and the Stanford Chicano Fellows Fellowship. With twenty-one books in total, during the past ten years, Professor Herrera's publications include fourteen collections of poetry, prose, short stories, young adult novels and picture books for children. His literary endeavors have garnered the Ezra Jack Keats Award, the Hungry Mind Award of Distinction, the Americas Award, and the Focal Award. Herrera is also a community arts leadership builder with youth-at-risk and migrant communities, and an actor with appearances on film and stage. *The Upside Down Boy*, a musical for young audiences based on his book, was well received in New York City in 2004.



Juan Felipe Herrera

Author Page Curbstone Press Website 2001

Activity

Don't know how it all started. The frozen feeling,
This fender inside wanting to crash against everything.
Blown out blue night. My face.

With "*CrashBoomLove*", poet and professor Juan Herrera has provided a powerful and illuminating voice to a generation of youth across America. Intense, riveting and powerful, the award-winning novel, written entirely in verse, is the story of Cesar Garcia, a 16 year-old boy whose life in a southern California migrant town is becoming increasingly self-destructive. Recently abandoned by his father, Cesar and his Mama Lucy find themselves alone, attempting to make sense of their lives without Papi's reassurance of a brighter future. Neither the lulling of Selenia's voice or the mind-numbing effects of drugs or alcohol are enough to bring Cesar anything but a moment's relief from the incessant challenges for power, friendship, girls, comfort, and repose.

Laden with intense themes, *CrashBoomLove* is not a light read. However, in addition to increasing cultural awareness and recognition, the novel readily provides the springboard for rich discussion involving delicate and critical issues including cultural understanding, conflict resolution, community, friendship, gangs, drug, and alcohol use.

This compelling novel is sure to resonate strongly among high school readers for its riveting account of the life of a young boy struggling every day to hold onto memories of his father, his culture, and his dignity during volatile times

Suggested Accompanying Activities

Style analysis

As the story is written in verse, it provides an opportunity for class discussion and observation of the author's unique style and use of language. Discuss the author's use of:

- Subjective imagery
- Tone
- Symbolism
- Use of both Spanish and English languages and how this affects the story verse and why the author chose to write in this fashion
- Mysterious and compelling chapter titles

Character analysis

Discuss how the character changes from the beginning of the story to the end. How does the tone, imagery change from the beginning of the story to the end and parallel the change in Cesar?

[Juan Felipe Herrera Teacher Resource File <http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/herrera.htm>]

Resources

Herrera, Juan Felipe. *Calling the Doves/El canto de las palomas*. Children's Book Press. 2001.

Herrera, Juan Felipe. *Cinnamon Girl: letters found inside a cereal box*. HarperCollins, 2005.

Herrera, Juan Felipe. *Crashboomlove: A Novel in Verse*. University of New Mexico Press. 1999.

Herrera, Juan Felipe. *Featherless/Desplumado*. Children's Book Press. 2004.

Herrera, Juan Felipe. *Upside Down Boy/El nino de cabeza*. Children's Book Press. 2000.

Internet Websites

Juan Felipe Herrera Author Page <http://www.curbstone.org/authdetail.cfm?AuthID=62>

Juan Felipe Herrera Teacher Resource File <http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/herrera.htm>

Magical Realism-Juan Felipe Herrera <http://www.magicalrealism.com/authors/170.html>