



**Classroom Guide for
CHESS RUMBLE**

Written by **G. Neri**
Illustrated by **Jesse Joshua Watson**

Reading Level

*Reading Level: Grades 4–5

Interest Level: Grades 4–7

Guided Reading Level: T

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: 3.5/1.0

Lexile™ Measure: 610L

*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Themes

Conflict Resolution, Family, School, Bullying, Coping with Death, Self Esteem/Identity, Pride, Friendship, Mentors, Urban Life, Peer Pressure, Responsibility, Education, Forgiveness, Overcoming Obstacles, Youth Violence, Dreams and Aspirations, Empathy/Compassion, Respect, Games (chess), Poetry, Realistic Fiction, African/African American Interest

Synopsis

*Three moves
is all it takes
to change the outcome
of the game.*

In Marcus's world, battles are fought everyday—on the street, at home, and in school. Angered by his sister's death and his father's departure, and pushed to the brink by a bullying classmate, Marcus fights back—with his fists.

One punch away from being kicked out of school and his home, Marcus encounters a mysterious chess master named CM who challenges him to fight his battles on the chess board. Reluctant to change, Marcus has to hit rock bottom before he accepts CM's help to regain control of his life.

Inspired by chess enrichment programs in inner-city schools, *Chess Rumble* explores the ability of a strategic game to empower young people with the tools they need to anticipate their moves through life.

BACKGROUND

Chess: **Chess** originated from the two-player Indian war game called *chatarung* (a Sanskrit word referring to the four divisions of an Indian army), which dates back to the 6th century CE. The game was then brought to Persia during the Islamic conquest (638-651 CE) where it continued to evolve and came to be known as *shatranj*. The invasion of Spain by the Moors brought *shatranj* to Western Europe, and from there it then spread through trade routes. By the 11th century, the game was well known throughout Europe.

It wasn't until the 15th century in medieval Europe, however, that the "romantic era of chess" took hold and the game evolved to gain many of the basic rules and ideas prevalent until the 1880s.

The first United States Championship was held in 1845 and the first women's championship followed in 1937. The National Chess Federation—later the United States Chess Federation (USCF)—was officially founded in 1939.¹

Bobby Fischer, who many consider to be the greatest chess player of all time, was a well-known American chess grandmaster and in 1972 became the eleventh World Chess Champion. He was the first and only native-born American to win the title of world champion.²

Free Verse: *Chess Rumble* is written in free verse, an open form of poetry that has no regular meter, rhythm, or rhyme scheme and usually follows the natural rhythms of everyday speech. A **free verse** poem does not follow set rules, but it does have intentional line breaks to indicate where the reader should pause.³

Narrative Verse: Narrative verse is a form of poetry that tells a story, often using the voices of a narrator and other characters. The poems are often dramatic, long, and compelling, such as *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. Although **narrative poems** can have a set rhythm and rhyme structure, they do not necessarily have to.⁴

School Violence: According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), **school violence**⁵ is a subgroup of **youth violence**⁶, and typically occurs between the ages of 10 and 24. Bullying, fighting, weapon use, electronic aggression, and gang violence are all examples of violent behavior that can also occur as school violence.

Although they do not guarantee or contribute to youth violence, various individual, family, peer, and community **risk factors** are associated with youth violence and increase the likelihood that a young individual will become violent.⁷ In addition to understanding the risk factors involved, it is important to focus on prevention efforts that reduce perpetuating factors to stop youth violence. Explore the CDC's **Youth Violence Prevention Strategies** that list effective programs, prevention guidance tools, and other resources.⁸

¹ <https://www.uschess.org/content/view/7326/28/>

² <http://www.biography.com/people/bobby-fischer-9295608>

³ <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/glossary-term/free-verse>

⁴ <http://literarydevices.net/narrative/>

⁵ <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/schoolviolence/index.html>

⁶ <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/definitions.html>

⁷ <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/riskprotectivefactors.html#Risk-Factors>

⁸ <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/prevention.html>

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

1. Take a look at the front and back covers. Take a picture walk. Ask students to make a prediction. Do you think this book will be fiction or nonfiction? What makes you think so? What clues do the author and illustrator give to help you know whether this book will be fiction or nonfiction?
2. What do you know about free verse poetry? Can you give an example? What is the difference between free verse and other types of poetry?
3. Have you ever played chess? What do you know about the game? What do you think is the most important skill needed when a person plays chess?
4. Are you or have you ever been in any afterschool and/or enrichment programs? If so, what are they and why did you join? What do you like/dislike about the programs?
5. How would you define bullying? What are some examples of bullying? What effect does bullying have on the person being bullied? On others? What should you do if you're being bullied? How might others help when a person is being bullied?
6. Have you ever lost someone close to you? Have you or has someone you know had a loved one pass away? How did you feel?
7. Why do you think I chose this book for us to read today?

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1, Craft & Structure, Strand 5, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

Read and talk about the title of the book. Ask students what they think the title, *Chess Rumble*, means. Then ask them what they think this book will most likely be about and who the book might be about. What places might be talked about in the story? What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?

Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, dedications, illustrations, chapters, and author and illustrator bios on the back flap of the jacket.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- how chess is important to the story.
- how chess relates to Marcus's life.
- how Marcus learns to deal with his problems.
- what Marcus learns from playing chess.
- to what the book title, *Chess Rumble*, refers

Have students also read to determine how the story is structured and how the information is presented. Encourage students to consider why the author, G. Neri, would want to share this story with young people.

VOCABULARY

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below. Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

CONTENT SPECIFIC

'hood	wino	lot (parking)	mug	headlock	up in my grill
baller	mad skills	shopliftin'	tag	real tight	lookout
alleys	loiterin'	checkmate	throwdown	middlegame	endgame
opponent	con man	shorties	cardiac	busted	opening move
pawns	gang	offense	Grand Master	gang bangin'	pound

ACADEMIC

squeal	haze	prejudice	heap	barriers	obligation
greedy	unexpected	ache	fainted	swollen	obstacle
progress	glare	scrunch	posturized	arrested	impress

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite evidence with their answers.**

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

1. What problems does Marcus have at home? Why do his twin brothers and his mom make him so angry?
2. What problems does Marcus have at school? Why is he getting into trouble? What does Ms. Tate say will happen to Marcus if he keeps getting into trouble at school?
3. Who is Latrell? How does Marcus feel about him? Why does he feel this way?
4. How does Latrell bully Marcus? What does he say and/or do? What does Marcus say and/or do in response?
5. Where does Ms. Tate send Marcus after his fight with Latrell in the bathroom? How does Marcus feel about being there? Who does he meet there?
6. What does Marcus's mom say to Marcus that makes him angry and then raise his fist?
7. Why does Marcus have to speak with his dad on the phone? How does he feel when speaking with his dad?
8. When Marcus goes to retrieve his basketball at the park, what does he stumble upon? Who does he see?
9. What does CM say is the "name of the game," and why does he think Marcus "could use some of" it? How does CM convince Marcus to play a game of chess?
10. What strategy advice does CM give Marcus about the game of chess while Marcus is playing with Kevin? How many moves does it take to change the outcome of the game? What are the opening move, middlegame, and endgame in chess?
11. What does Marcus learn about CM's past?

12. What happens when Marcus sees Latrell and his friends while he is walking home from the park? What makes Marcus react violently and start to fight them? How does Marcus's mom react when he eventually comes home?
13. According to Marcus, when did everything change and start to fall apart in his life? Why?
14. How does Marcus use what he learned from the game of chess to confront Latrell? How does Marcus "do the unexpected"?
15. What does the name CM mean? Why is CM called CM?
16. What is CM's idea for a new program at school? What will it be called and what will they do in the program?
17. To what does the title of the book, *Chess Rumble*, refer? What does it mean?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking
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(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4–6)

1. How are the verses in the book written? Is there any regular meter, rhythm, or rhyme scheme? Why is this?
2. How does the author, G. Neri, use dialect and tone to create the characters voices? Find 2-3 examples in the story and explain how dialect and tone gives voice and personality to the character.
3. What is Marcus's life like? What struggles does Marcus face?
4. How does Marcus cope with his sister's death and his father leaving? Does he successfully manage his emotions? Why or why not?
5. Why does Marcus's mom place so much responsibility on Marcus? Do you think it is fair to Marcus? Why or why not?
6. Why do you think Marcus resorts to name calling and physical violence when he is angry? What is he avoiding?
7. Do you think Marcus is a good person? Support your claim with three or four examples from the story.
8. Why do you think Marcus believes that Ms. Tate is out to get him? Do you think Marcus is right? Does Ms. Tate care about Marcus as a student? Why or why not?
9. Marcus blames others for his anger problems. Does Marcus take responsibility for his own actions? Does Marcus's difficult home life excuse his anger and violent behavior? Why or why not?
10. What does Ms. Tate mean when she says, "Maybe you can use that anger to break down barriers instead of creating new ones"?
11. Why does Ms. Tate send Marcus to the library instead of her office after Marcus and Latrell fight? How does she think this will benefit Marcus?
12. Marcus throws the chessboard to the floor when CM challenges him to a game of chess. Why does Marcus react this way? How do you think Marcus feels? How do you think Marcus feels after he stomps out of the library? Do you believe he is happy with his actions? What makes you think so?
13. Describe how Marcus's relationship with Latrell changes during the story. Why did Latrell and Marcus's friendship end? How is their relationship at the end of the story?
14. Do you think Marcus respects his mom? Why or why not? Do you think Marcus would physically hurt his family? Why or why not?
15. What obligation is Marcus referring to when he says to his dad on the phone, "Where your obligation at?" How does Marcus have an obligation to his family?
16. Marcus thinks all of his friends are good at something. Do you think Marcus has high self-esteem and self-confidence? Why or why not?
17. What does CM mean when he says, "See, you think you're a king, but you're just a pawn," to Marcus?

18. Why does Marcus stay away from Double Z and his other friends at school after his fight with Latrell? What is Marcus trying to avoid by ignoring his old friends?
19. Describe CM's relationship with Marcus. Who is CM to Marcus? What role does CM play in Marcus's life? How does CM use the game of chess to relate to Marcus's life?
20. Chess is a strategy game based on control and knowing your next three moves. How does chess teach control? What does chess teach about making decisions?
21. After Latrell first played chess with Marcus, Latrell says he is sorry about Marcus's sister. How do you think this makes Marcus feel? What makes you think so?
22. Why do you think the author, G. Neri, chose to use the game of chess in the story and not another game? What symbolism does the game of chess have that parallels Marcus's life? How does the strategy used in chess apply to the obstacles in Marcus's life? What do you think Marcus learns from chess?

Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4)
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3 and Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4 and 6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion. You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. Latrell and Marcus regularly call each other names and get into physical fights. Have you ever been bullied or experienced physical violence? Do you know someone who has been bullied or experienced physical violence? How did you/ he or she feel? What did you/ he or she do to handle the situation? What advice would you give to someone who is being bullied?
2. What kind of person is Marcus? How would you describe him? Do you think he is a good person? Why or why not?
3. Marcus lives in an urban setting. How does your neighborhood compare to Marcus's? How might where you live and grow up make a difference in your behavior and life choices? What can neighborhoods and cities offer to positively influence the community?
4. After Marcus's sister dies, life is not easy for Marcus. He often blames other people in his life for his anger and violent actions. Do you think Marcus's struggles excuse his aggressive behavior? Why or why not? Why is it important to take responsibility for your own actions? Is there ever a time or reason when your actions are excused? Why or why not?
5. It can be very difficult when close family members or friends pass away, and people experience grief differently and react in different ways. What do you do to cope with or manage your feelings when you are missing someone and feeling sad? What advice can you give someone who might have lost a friend or family member?
6. CM acts as a mentor to Marcus and helps him learn to use chess to think before he reacts. What does the word *mentor* mean to you? Think of an adult or someone in your life who you look up to for guidance and advice. What makes this person a good mentor? How does this person help you?
7. Marcus learns to use chess as a way to control his anger. What do you do when you're feeling angry or mad? How does it help you calm down?
8. CM teaches Marcus about the importance of knowing your middlegame and figuring out your endgame in life. How does knowing your middlegame help you to figure out your endgame? How can you use chess to help navigate through life? What are

some of your goals and aspirations for your future? What might you have to do to reach those goals and aspirations?

ELL/ESL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader. Students who speak Spanish can help with the pronunciations of the Spanish words in the book.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
 - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
 - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about what they admire about one of the characters in the story.
5. In a guided reading group or small listening stations, have students listen to author G. Neri read from *Chess Rumble* as they follow along in their own book.
6. The book contains some content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

Geography/Social Studies

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Writings Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strand 2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

1. Have students research the history of chess and how the game has evolved over time. Create a timeline showing the evolution of chess from its origin to the start of the current form of chess that is played today.
2. Have students research their school's or their school district's policies on bullying and/or violence. What do the policies say about parents', teachers', and administrators' roles in helping students avoid bullies and/or violence? How might

these policies be improved to better educate the school community and protect students?

3. Have students research various programs that are available to students and other children in the community. What school or local enrichment programs are available to students? Have students choose one program and write a letter to the editor of the school or local newspaper about what makes it a quality enrichment program. How does it help and engage children? What could be improved? What other enrichment programs would students be interested in? Or, if there are no or too few local enrichment programs available, have students write a persuasive letter about why these programs should exist, their benefits, and what kinds of programs would be of interest to students.
4. Many of the characters in *Chess Rumble* speak with a dialect. Have students research what a dialect is and how it differs from an accent and slang.
5. In 1999, [Maurice Ashley](#) made history as the first African American International Grandmaster in chess.⁹ Ask students to write a research paper about Maurice Ashley and his life achievements. Do you think Maurice Ashley is someone Marcus would respect or see as a role model or mentor? Why or why not?

Writing/English Language Arts

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Conventions of Standard English, Strand 1)

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 9)

1. Have students examine how to create a character's voice by looking at the dialect, tone, and descriptive and poetic language. Ask students to analyze excerpts from *Chess Rumble* and determine how these elements help to show the reader each character's traits and feelings. What does the character say and how does the character say it to make you think he or she feels a certain way?
2. Have students watch the [video interview](#)¹⁰ with the author, G. Neri, and illustrator, Jesse Joshua Watson, of *Chess Rumble*, G. Neri's [interview on The Lowdown](#)¹¹, and G. Neri's [interview with Media Talk](#).¹² Ask students to imagine that they are going to interview G. Neri and Jesse Joshua Watson. Have students write a list of interview questions that they would like to ask them. What thoughts and questions about the story, characters, or themes in *Chess Rumble* do you have? What do you want to know about the author's writing process? What do you want to know about the illustrating process? What do you want to know about publishing, being an author, or being an illustrator?
3. After Marcus's sister dies, Marcus struggles to talk about and cope with his feelings. Ask students to write a letter from Marcus's perspective to one of the following people: his mother, his father, Ms. Tate, or Latrell. In the letter, have students write about how Marcus is feeling toward this person with examples from the story. Why does he feel this way? What does he wish was different? What can be done to change the situation and make it better?
4. At the end of the story, Marcus and Latrell are playing a game of chess together and Latrell says he is sorry that Marcus's sister died. Have students write a journal entry from Latrell's point of view after this interaction about why he bullies Marcus, how he

⁹ <http://mauriceashley.com/>

¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RW0a5XVRU-k>

¹¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=59&v=SkZj9pfXqg8>

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=brZRVDIznLo>

- felt after playing chess with Marcus, and why he expressed his sympathy and how he feels about it.
5. Have students write a thank you letter to CM from Marcus in the future as a senior in high school, explaining his appreciation for CM and his mentorship. Ask students to write about how Marcus has used the tools that CM taught him to make good decisions now. How is Marcus doing academically and socially in school? What are his dreams and aspirations? How does he plan to achieve these dreams?
 6. Encourage students to watch the [book trailer](#) for *Chess Rumble* and other examples of student-made book trailers.¹³ If the necessary equipment is available at school or in students' homes, encourage students to record and edit their own book trailers for *Chess Rumble*. For ideas, check out the [Creating Reading Excitement with Book Trailers](#) lesson plan by [ReadWriteThink.org](#).¹⁴
 7. Ask students to read the [School Library Journal \(SLJ\) article](#) about inspiring reluctant readers, featuring author G. Neri.¹⁵ How might sharing this article be beneficial to young people? Have students interview classmates about books they have read that inspired them, encouraged them to read, made them readers, or changed them in some way. How does he or she feel reading has had a positive influence on his or her life? Using both the article and information gathered in their student interviews, ask students to write about how books have the power to positively influence, transform, and change lives.
 8. Help students learn to differentiate between narrative and lyric poetry with the [research-based novel study unit](#) for *Chess Rumble* created by the staff at the award-winning nonprofit [ReadWorks.org](#).¹⁶
 9. Ask students to write their own free verse or narrative free verse poems about bullying, youth violence, or another topic of interest. Encourage students to have their poems reflect their personal experiences and/or their feelings and opinions toward the topics.
 10. Have students read [Yummy](#)¹⁷ and [It Doesn't Have to Be This Way](#),¹⁸ two books that also deal with youth violence. As students reflect on each story, ask them to compare and contrast what each book teaches about violence. What is the central idea of each book? How is violence portrayed and dealt with in each book? How do these books compare to *Chess Rumble*?
 11. Movies, television programs, video games, and music often glamorize gang life and make it seem cool. Ask students to write about why they think there are more incidents of violence than nonviolence reported in the media. Do you think seeing, reading, or hearing about violence and gangs influences the way young people act in real life?
 12. Middle school students may wish to submit a written piece to the annual [Do the Write Thing Challenge](#) held by the National Campaign to Stop Violence.¹⁹ Student entries address how violence has affected their lives, the causes of youth violence, and what can they do about youth violence. Check out <http://www.dtw.org> for submission guidelines.

¹³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qHPpsU7aYHQ>

¹⁴ <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/book-report-alternative-creating-c-30914.html>

¹⁵ <http://www.slj.com/2014/04/diversity/how-author-g-neri-and-librarian-kimberly-defusco-changed-a-life/#>

¹⁶ <https://www.readworks.org/lessons/grade6/keeping-night-watch-and-chess-rumble>

¹⁷ <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2724>

¹⁸ <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2795>

¹⁹ <http://www.dtw.org/the-challenge/instructions>

Art/Performing Arts

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

1. Have students investigate and research American graffiti art. What is graffiti? How and where did it originate? What purposes has graffiti served? What are the different [styles](#)?²⁰ Encourage students to look at images of graffiti art online or, if possible, on structures in your neighborhood. Ask each student to select a style of graffiti art to find images or take pictures of and write a personal reflection about the art. What does it mean to you? What message is the artist trying to express?
2. With a small group of students, make a Reader's Theater script of *Chess Rumble*. Choose students to say the speaking parts of Marcus, Marcus's mother, Latrell, CM, and Ms. Tate. Choose two or three narrators to set each scene. Have students perform the story for the rest of the class.
3. Have students work in pairs or small groups to practice and play the game of chess. First explain the basic rules and model [how to play chess](#).²¹ Then, ask students to track their thought processes while playing. What is your middlegame? How do you anticipate your next move? How does knowing your middlegame help you throughout the game? How can playing chess make you a better critical problem solver?
4. Have students read aloud or act out their free verse poems/narrative free verse poems from Writing/English Language Arts activity no. 9.

Home-School Connection

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 2 and 3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strand 7)

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

1. Encourage students to interview a parent, a guardian, or an adult mentor about a friend or someone close to them who has passed away. How was this person important to them? Did they get a chance to say goodbye? How did they say goodbye? How did they feel? What did they do to make themselves feel better? What advice do they have for other people who have had a loved one pass away?
2. Have students talk to a parent, a guardian, or an adult mentor about their experiences with bullying. Were they bullied? Did they know someone who was bullied? How did they react and handle the situation? Did they forgive the bully? What advice do they have for anyone being bullied or bullying others?
3. Ask students to draw portraits of people who are their personal role models and answer a few questions about their role models to present their portrait to the class. Who is your role model? Why do you admire him or her? How has this person influenced you or what has this person taught you? What actions and qualities of your role model do you admire most?
4. Encourage students to ask a parent, a guardian, or an adult mentor to accompany them on an interview with someone who plays chess. How did the person get started playing and how often does she or he play? How important is it to have a strategy or game plan? What is the person's strategy? What is most challenging about the game? How does the person think the game of chess can be useful for navigating obstacles in life?
5. Marcus becomes interested in chess after he stumbles upon CM and other players playing chess games in the park. If possible, ask students to go with a parent or guardian to a park or an area where people frequently play chess and observe them

²⁰ <http://weburbanist.com/2009/09/24/graffiti-designs-styles-tagging-bombing-painting/>

²¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KITEQZ5Sy4E>

playing. What is happening? How is the situation similar to or different from the scene described in *Chess Rumble*?

6. Have students play chess with a parent, a guardian, or an adult at home and both ask and reflect upon the following questions: Have you ever played chess before? Is it harder or easier than you thought? What strategy did you use while playing? Did you use the three-step game plan that CM and Marcus use? Why is it important to think about your next three moves?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

G. Neri was born outside of Los Angeles, where he developed a passion for filmmaking and animation. His films earned several honors, including a Student Academy Award nomination. Neri went on to teach animation and storytelling to inner city youth and became a founding member of the *Truth* teen anti-smoking campaign. Now living in Tampa, Florida, with his wife and daughter, he has turned his talents to writing for teens and children. This was his debut book. Visit him on the web at <http://www.gregneri.com>.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Jesse Joshua Watson is a fine artist and illustrator whose work has appeared in galleries, on CD covers, and more recently in children's books. An avid traveler, much of Watson's artwork reflects the cultures and people he connects with along the way. His other pastimes include surfing and engaging in his own intense chess battles with family members. Watson lives with his wife and their sons in Port Townsend, Washington. Visit him on the web at <http://www.jessewatson.com/home>.

Book Information

\$18.95, HARDCOVER

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64 pages, 6-1/2 x 9-1/4

*Reading Level: Grades 4–5

*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Interest Level: Grades 4–7

Guided Reading Level: T

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: 3.5/1.0

Lexile™ Measure: 610L

Themes: Conflict Resolution, Family, School, Bullying, Coping with Death, Self Esteem/Identity, Pride, Friendship, Mentors, Urban Life, Peer Pressure, Responsibility, Education, Forgiveness, Overcoming Obstacles, Youth Violence, Dreams and Aspirations, Empathy/Compassion, Respect, Games (chess), Poetry, Realistic Fiction, African/African American Interest

RESOURCES ON THE WEB:

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