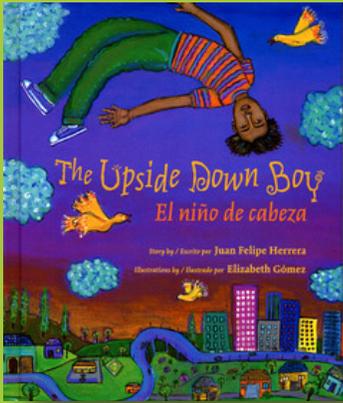


TEACHER'S GUIDE



LEE & LOW BOOKS

The Upside Down Boy/ El niño de cabeza

written by Juan Herrera

illustrated by Elizabeth Gómez

About the Book

Genre: Autobiography/
Memoir

***Reading Level:** Grades 2–3

Interest Level: Grades 1–5

Guided Reading Level: N

**Accelerated Reader® Level/
Points:** 3.1/0.5

Lexile™ Measure: AD450L

*Reading level based on the Spache
Readability Formula

Themes: Identity, Self-Esteem
and Confidence, Overcoming
Obstacles, Immigration, Home,
Farms, Friendship, Families,
School/Education, Dreams/
Aspirations, Conflict Resolution,
Childhood Experiences and
Memories, Self-Control and
Self-Regulation, California,
Courage, Farming, Kindness
and Caring, Optimism and
Enthusiasm, Latino/Hispanic/
Mexican Interest

SYNOPSIS

The Upside Down Boy is award-winning poet Juan Felipe Herrera's engaging memoir of the year his migrant family settled down so that he could go to school for the first time.

Juanito is bewildered by the new school, and he misses the warmth of country life. Everything he does feels upside down. He eats lunch when it's recess; he goes out to play when it's time for lunch; and his tongue feels like a rock when he tries to speak English. But a sensitive teacher and loving family help him to find his voice and make a place for himself in this new world through poetry, art, and music.

Juan Felipe Herrera's playful language and the colorful, magical art of Elizabeth Gómez capture the universal experience of children entering a new school feeling like strangers in a world that seems upside down-at first.

Awards and honors:

- Texas Bluebonnet Award, Masterlist



BACKGROUND

Migrant Farm Workers (Campesinos): These workers move from place to place to work on farms planting, caring for and harvesting various crops. This photo essay shows examples of the work performed: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/migrant-workers-us-food-production_us_56f01385e4b09bf44a9ddf38. Oftentimes migrant farm workers live in temporary housing. This housing is likely to be very basic and in close quarters with other workers. This article further describes the challenges related to farm worker housing: <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2016/05/02/struggle-to-provide-housing-for-migrant-farmworkers>.

According to the National Farmworker Ministry (<http://nfwm.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2011/06/us-farmworkers-eng.pdf>), there are up to 500 of children and teens (under the age of 18) hired as farm laborers in fields across the United States. Many of these young people are undocumented immigrants or are part of migrant farm working families. Unfortunately, most of these hardworking people go unnamed and unnoticed. Migrant farm workers often follow the crops to sustain employment and many of the children of migrant workers go to school during the day and work several hours as well. This lifestyle can be very disruptive to students because they move several times a year and go from classroom to classroom often not bonding with teachers or other students.”

An article posted on ;Colorín Colorado!, a resource site for English Language Learners educators and families, includes anecdotes that illustrate how although migrant farm workers take pride in their work, they often strive for improved opportunities for their children through education: <http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/migrant-students-what-we-need-know-help-them-succeed>.

Poet Laureate of the United States: Juan Felipe Herrera was named the first Latino Poet Laureate of the United States in 2015. He served two terms in this position. The Library of Congress appoints each Poet Laureate. The role involves being a national advocate for poetry; the Poet Laureate “seeks to raise the national consciousness to a greater appreciation of the reading and writing of poetry.” Each nominee speaks and reads poetry at key events and also leads projects of his or her

own interest. Read about examples at this site: https://www.loc.gov/poetry/about_laureate.html. Specific examples of Herrera’s projects during his two terms can be found here: <https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/herrera/>. Ideas for studying Juan Felipe Herrera with students can be found in this blog post: <http://blog.leeandlow.com/2015/06/15/using-picture-books-to-teach-and-discuss-poet-laureate-juan-felipe-herrera-with-students/>.

Additional titles by author and Poet Laureate, Juan Felipe Herrera:

Calling the Doves / El canto de las palomas written by Juan Herrera, illustrated by Elly Simmons
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/calling-the-doves-el-canto-de-las-palomas>

Grandma and Me at the Flea / Los Meros Meros Remateros written by Juan Herrera, illustrated by Anita De Lucio-Brock
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/grandma-and-me-at-the-flea-los-meros-meros-remateros>

Featherless/ Desplumado written by Juan Herrera, illustrated by Ernesto Cuevas
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/featherless-desplumado>

The Juan Felipe Herrera Collection: <https://www.leeandlow.com/collections/juan-felipe-herrera-collection>



VOCABULARY

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

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases 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

Campesinos, pinch, street lamp, cornstalk, potato burrito, grape vines, finger painting, *sombreros*, chiles, salsa, canary, *bunuelos*, symphony music, phonograph, mustache, conductor, harmonica, choir

Academic

settle down, tumble, admires, inspired

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

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

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

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

1. What's it like to start at a new school? What's exciting? What's hard? If you don't speak the language used in your classroom, what additional challenges might you experience? What are some ways people who don't speak the same language can share ideas and feelings with each other?
2. Why do parents want their children to attend school? What are some ways parents support their children's education?

Exploring the Book

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

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

Talk about the title of the book. Then ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. 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, introduction, illustrations, bilingual text and author and illustrators' dedications. Point out that this book is bilingual. Ask students why a book might be written this way. Why does it matter what language an author uses? How does a language change how a story is told or who hears it?

Setting a Purpose for Reading

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

Have students read to find out about:

- what makes the author feel “upside down” at his new school
- what his family, friends and teacher do to support him and help him find his voice

Encourage students to consider why the author, Juan Felipe Herrera, would want to share this story with young people.



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

1. What information does the author give in his introduction? What do the illustrations on these pages show?
2. What language does Juanito speak? What does he worry will happen if he tries to speak English? What kind of face does he make?
3. What does Juanito notice about his new school and classroom? What does he do? What do the other children do?
4. What kind of artwork does Juanito do on his first day of school? What does he make? What happens when his teacher asks him about his picture?
5. What do Papi, Mama and Mrs. Andasola say about Juanito's painting? How are their responses different than the response he received at school?
6. What does Mrs. Sampson invite Juanito to do in front of the class? What happens?
7. What does Juanito do with his family at home?
8. What does Mama tell Juanito about her own childhood? What does she say about how Papi learned English?
9. What does Mrs. Sampson ask the class to write? What does Juanito think about?
10. Describe Juanito and Papi's conversation on the way to school. What does Papi give Juanito?
11. What is Juanito's surprise at Open House Day?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. Why do the family members repeat the street name over and over? How do you think they each feel about what's happening?
2. On the walk to school, what differences does Juanito note between his old home and his new one? Why does he pinch himself?
3. Why is recess confusing to Juanito? Why are there cows in the illustration? Describe what Juanito does and what the other kids do. Why does Juanito say he's "the upside down boy?"
4. How are Papi, Mama and Mrs. Andasola's responses to Juanito's painting encouraging? Why might artwork be especially meaningful to someone in Juanito's situation?
5. What impact does it have on Juanito when his teacher calls his voice "beautiful?"
6. How does Juanito act differently at home than he does at school? What do you think causes these differences?
7. What do you think Mama and Papa want Juanito to learn from their stories about their pasts?
8. Describe Juanito's experience writing a poem. Is it easy or hard for him? Do you think he enjoys it? How do you know? How does he react when he gets an A?
9. How are words and music related to each other for the author?
10. Why do you think knowing everyone's name in his previous home was significant for Juanito? What's comforting about a familiar environment?
11. How does Juanito change over the course of the story?
12. Why do you think the author chooses to end the story with the line "Uno... dos... and three!"



“Juan Felipe Herrera’s story—the product of stream of consciousness recollections from his third grade experience—makes for a warm and vivid children’s book.”

–*The Bloomsbury Review*

“*The Upside Down Boy* is more than good—it’s excellent. It is...a celebration of family, and of the importance of a frank dialogue between parents and children.”

–*Newsweek en Español*

“*El niño* is an excellent addition to a growing body of work on the experience of adjusting to life in a new culture.”

–*School Library Journal*

Reader’s Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

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. When he’s walking to school on his first day, Juanito makes a face that is “half funny, half scared.” Draw what this face might look like. Explain how someone can feel two different emotions at once. Describe a time when you felt “half funny, half scared.”
2. When he’s confused about lunch and recess, Juanito says, “My feet float through the clouds when all I want to do is touch the earth.” What does he mean? Describe a situation when you or a character in another story felt this way and what actions you took.
3. Compare how Juanito feels and acts at school and at home. Describe how his behavior at school changed at the end of the story. What helped him to not feel “upside down” anymore? Describe a situation when you felt nervous and then became more confident. How did your behavior change as you became more comfortable?
4. Rudine Sims Bishop from Ohio State University says that books can be both mirrors (to see yourself) and windows (to see and learn about the

experiences of others.) Make a two-column chart with ideas about how *The Upside Down Boy* serves as a mirror and a window for you.

5. How did art, music and poetry help Juanito adjust to his new school? What activities help you connect with others and express yourself?
6. How do you think the experiences described in this story contributed to Juan Felipe Herrera becoming an acclaimed poet and author? What experiences have you had that have inspired you to think about your future career?

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.
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 their experiences starting school, moving to a new school, or about a teacher who made a difference in their lives.
 5. The book 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. 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.
 6. If your students speak Spanish and English, share the author's comments about how the two versions of his books are related to each other, found in this interview: http://www.parents-choice.org/article.cfm?CFID=e6f3443a-037b-49db-bdb8-7a2c77c28dda&CFTOKEN=0&art_id=295&the_page=editorials. Ask students to choose a section of the story to compare and contrast the two versions of the text.

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.

English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1-3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4 and 5 and Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

1. Read the author's dedication at the end of the book to his teacher, Mrs. Sampson. Ask each student to tell or write a story or poem honoring someone who helped him or her become "a believer in [his or her] own voice."
2. Revisit the text and make a list of lines that evoke interesting images (e.g., letters and numbers growing like seeds or a voice growing like a grapevine.) Ask students to choose a line, create their own illustration of the image and write about their interpretation of its meaning.
3. Revisit Juanito's poem about his parents. Discuss what the images communicate about his parents' influence on his life. Have students write and illustrate poems about their families in a similar style.
4. Read other books by Juan Felipe Herrera such as *Featherless* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/featherless-desplumado>), *Calling the Doves* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/calling-the-doves-el-canto-de-las-palomas>), or *Grandma and Me at the Flea* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/grandma-and-me-at-the-flea-los-meros-meros-remateros>). Ask students to choose an image or theme that is repeated in multiple books and write about its significance. For an example, see the author's comments about the theme of flying across his texts in this interview: http://www.parents-choice.org/article.cfm?CFID=e6f3443a-037b-49db-bdb8-7a2c77c28dda&CFTOKEN=0&art_id=295&the_page=editorials
5. Use this book as a springboard for an author study of Juan Felipe Herrera. Find a long list of ideas here: <http://blog.leeandlow.com/2015/06/15/using-picture-books-to-teach-and-discuss-poet-laureate-juan-felipe-herrera-with-students/>
6. Read other stories about students who must adjust to a new school, such as *First Day in Grapes* (<https://>



www.leeandlow.com/books/first-day-in-grapes).

Compare the characters' experiences. Make a list with your class about strategies for empathizing with and welcoming new students.

Art

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strand 7)
(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strand 1)

1. Ask students to study the illustrations of the text. How does each illustration convey Juanito's experiences and feelings? How do the images reflect his culture and background? (For instance, notice the emphasis on traditional foods, the sun and plants.) Have students use oil pastels or paints to imitate the bright and bold style of illustrator Elizabeth Gomez while depicting items or images important to their lives or family background.
2. Experiment with finger painting as a means of self-expression. Ask students to paint while focusing on a certain memory, emotion or in response to a piece of music. Have students present their work to partners or the class and describe how the colors, textures and shapes reflect their ideas.

Social Studies

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3 and Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7–9)
(Writing Standards, Research to Build and Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9)

1. Read the author's first childhood memoir, *Calling the Doves*, and use it along with this book to create a timeline of his childhood (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/calling-the-doves-el-canto-de-las-palomas>). Use outside sources (for instance, the author's website and linked resources: <http://blueflowerarts.com/artist/juan-felipe-herrera/>) to add more factual information to your timeline and extend it into his adulthood.
2. The author's family's background as migrant farm workers is a significant influence on his work. Have students work in small groups to research various issues that impact the lives of migrant farm families, such as housing, education, pesticide use, work conditions, etc. See this site for resources: <http://www.farmworkerfamily.org/information>

School-Home Connection

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strand 1)

1. In an interview with Democracy Now! (https://www.democracynow.org/2015/10/9/first_latino_us_poet_laureate_juan), Juan Felipe Herrera compared growing up in a migrant family is like "living in literature every day." He says, "Yes, it is, because it's all about storytelling. It's about telling our stories and our songs and our riddles and our sayings and proverbs. And that's what it is. And it's rich, very rich." Ask students to discuss this quote with their families and share examples at school of stories, songs, riddles, sayings and proverbs that are important to their families.
2. Have students find out about the educational experiences of their parents and grandparents. Have them ask adults at home about the hopes they have for their children's educational achievements and why. Share responses at school and discuss common themes.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Juan Felipe Herrera is an acclaimed poet and children's book author. His first children's book, *Calling the Doves*, won the prestigious Ezra Jack Keats Award, and another book, *The Upside Down Boy*, was made into a musical for young audiences in 2004. He teaches at California State University, Fresno. He was appointed to be first Latino United States Poet Laureate in 2015. Find him online at <http://blueflowerarts.com/artist/juan-felipe-herrera/>.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Elizabeth Gomez is an internationally exhibited painter, widely acclaimed for her brilliant use of color and fantastical imagery. Her artwork for *The Upside Down Boy* by Juan Felipe Herrera was praised for its "delightful humor" and "colorful metaphor." A native of Mexico City, she now lives in Redwood City, California, with her husband and children. Find her online at <http://www.elizabethgomezart.com/>.

ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

LEE & LOW BOOKS is the largest children's book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, "about everyone, for everyone," is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at leeandlow.com.

ORDERING INFORMATION

On the Web:

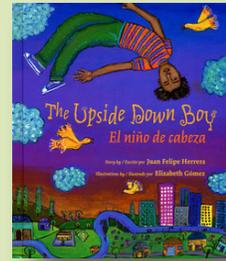
www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering (general order information)
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-upside-down-boy-el-nino-de-cabeza> (secure online ordering)

By Phone: 212-779-4400 ext. 25

By Fax: 212-683-1894

By Mail: Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

Book Information for *The Upside Down Boy*



\$9.95, PAPERBACK

978-0-89239-217-9

32 pages, 8-3/4 x 10-1/4

*Reading Level: Grades 2–3

*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Interest Level: Grades 1–5

Guided Reading Level: N

Accelerated Reader® Level/
Points: 3.1/0.5

Lexile™ Measure: AD450L

THEMES: Identity, Self-Esteem and Confidence, Overcoming Obstacles, Immigration, Home, Farms, Friendship, Families, School/Education, Dreams/ Aspirations, Conflict Resolution, Childhood Experiences and Memories, Self-Control and Self-Regulation, California, Courage, Farming, Kindness and Caring, Optimism and Enthusiasm, Latino/ Hispanic/Mexican Interest

RESOURCES ON THE WEB:

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-upside-down-boy-el-nino-de-cabeza>

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.