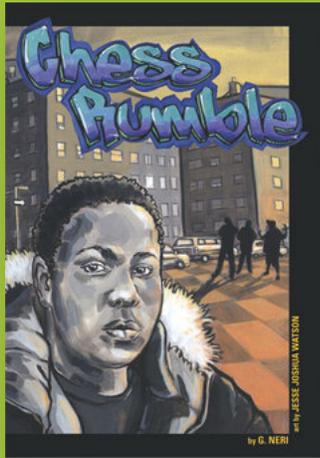


## TEACHER'S GUIDE



LEE & LOW BOOKS

# Chess Rumble

written by G. Neri

illustrated by Jesse Joshua Watson

## About the Book

**Genre:** Realistic Fiction

**\*Reading Level:** Grade 4–5

**Interest Level:** Grades 4 and up

**Guided Reading:** 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 chessboard. 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.

Awards and honors for *Chess Rumble* include:

- **ALA Notable Children's Books**, American Library Association (ALA)
- **Top Picks for Reluctant Readers**, BoysRead.org
- **Notable Children's Books in the Language Arts**, National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
- **Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers**, American Library Association (ALA)
- **Young Adult Choices**, International Literacy Association (ILA)
- **Best Book, Language Arts**, Society of School Librarians International
- **Children's Books of the Year**, Bank Street College of Education



## 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

([www.uschess.org/content/view/7326/28/](http://www.uschess.org/content/view/7326/28/)). 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.

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 ([www.biography.com/people/bobby-fischer-9295608](http://www.biography.com/people/bobby-fischer-9295608)). He was the first and only native-born American to win the title of world champion.

**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 ([www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/glossary-term/free%20verse](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/glossary-term/free%20verse)).

**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

(<http://literarydevices.net/narrative/>).

**School Violence:** According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), school violence ([www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/schoolviolence/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/schoolviolence/index.html)) is a subgroup of youth violence ([www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/definitions.html](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/definitions.html)), 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.

Various individual, family, peer, and community risk factors are associated with youth violence and increase the likelihood that a young individual will become violent, although any one risk factor does not guarantee or contribute to youth violence ([www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/riskprotectivefactors.com](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/riskprotectivefactors.com)). 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 ([www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/prevention.html](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/prevention.html)).

### Additional titles to teach about decision making and overcoming challenges:

**Yummy: The Last Days of a Southside Shorty** written by G. Neri and illustrated by Randy DuBurke  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2724>

**It Doesn't Have To Be This Way: A Barrio Story / No tiene que ser así: Una historia del barrio** written by Luis Rodríguez and illustrated by Daniel Galvez  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2795>

**Be Water, My Friend: The Early Years of Bruce Lee** written by Ken Mochizuki, illustrated by Dom Lee  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2360>

**I and I Bob Marley** written by Tony Medina, illustrated by Jesse Joshua Watson  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2702>



### 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

'hood, wino, lot (parking), nerves, checkers, big mouth, mug, headlock, up in my grill, know-it-alls, baller, mad skills, shopliftin', tag, real tight, chessboard, weasels, lookout, alleys, loiterin', checkmate, throwdown, wide-eyed, man of the house, middlegame, endgame, con man, shorties, cardiac, busted, opening move, pawns, gang, offense, Grand Master, gang bangin', badge of honor, warriors

#### Academic

opponent, squeal, haze, prejudice, heap, barriers, obligation, greedy, unexpected, ache, fainted, swollen, obstacle, progress, glare, scrunch, posturized, arrested, impress, innocent, disappear, rematch, potential, competitions

## 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 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?
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 or watched a game of 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, Craft & Structure, Strand 5, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1, 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 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, dedications, illustrations, chapters, and author and illustrator bios.



### Setting a Purpose for Reading

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

Have students read to find out:

- why Marcus has anger
- what Marcus does to cope with his obstacles he faces before he learns to play chess
- what Marcus learns about self regulation and decision making
- what chess strategies Marcus can apply to his life

Have students also read to analyze the story’s structure and why the illustrator, Jesse Joshua Watson, chooses to present the art in black and white. Encourage students to consider why the author, G. Neri, 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 and 3)

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. Why does Marcus not want to go to the cemetery?
9. When Marcus goes to retrieve his basketball at the park, what does he stumble upon? Who does he see?
10. What is Marcus’s nickname? Who gives him this nickname and why? Is this an affectionate or mean nickname? Why? How does it make Marcus feel?
11. 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?
12. 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?
13. What does Marcus learn about CM’s past?
14. 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?
15. According to Marcus, when did everything change and start to fall apart in his life? Why?
16. How does Marcus use what he learned from the game of chess to confront Latrell? How does Marcus “do the unexpected”?



“This book will become a standby pick for reluctant readers, who will be pulled in before they know it by the story’s quick pace and the authenticity of Marcus’s voice and experience.”

–*School Library Journal*

“Marcus’ authentic voice narrates in potent, free-verse poetry. Readers of all backgrounds will find themselves here, but this will have particular appeal among reluctant readers and young, inner-city teens.”

–*Booklist*

“The acrylic black-and-white illustrations are particularly effective at capturing natural expressions and the concrete-gray inner-cityscape.”

–*Kirkus Reviews*

17. What does the name CM mean?
18. What is CM’s idea for a new program at school? What will it be called and what will they do in the program?

### Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3, Craft & Structure, Strand 6)

1. How are the verses in the book written? Is there any regular meter, rhythm, or rhyme scheme? Why do you think the author, G. Neri, employs free verse to tell this story?
2. How does the author, G. Neri, use tone and urban dialect with slang to create the characters’ voices? Find two or three examples in the story and explain how tone and urban dialect with slang gives voice and personality to the character.
3. What is Marcus’s life like? What struggles does Marcus face?
4. How is *Chess Rumble* an example of narrative poetry? Using a graphic organizer, identify the story elements: characters, setting/place, time, problem, and solution.
5. How does Marcus cope with his sister’s death and his father leaving? Does he successfully manage his emotions? Why or why not?
6. Why does Marcus’s mom place so much responsibility on Marcus? Do you think it is fair to Marcus? Why or why not?
7. Why do you think Marcus resorts to name calling and physical violence when he is angry? What is he avoiding?
8. Do you think Marcus is a good person? Support your claim with three or four examples from the story.
9. 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?
10. 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?
11. What does Ms. Tate mean when she says, “Maybe you can use that anger to break down barriers instead of creating new ones”?
12. 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?
13. 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? Why?



14. 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?
15. Do you think Marcus respects his mom? Why or why not? Do you think Marcus would physically hurt his family? Why or why not?
16. 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?
17. 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?
18. What does CM mean when he says, "See, you think you're a king, but you're just a pawn," to Marcus?
19. 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?
20. 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?
21. 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?
22. 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?
23. 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, Strands 4–6)  
(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3, Craft & Structure, Strands 4, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9)

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 or know someone who has been? 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. Describe an event or scene in the story that you connect to the most and why. Have you ever felt what Marcus feels at different moments in the story?
3. How does your neighborhood compare to Marcus's? What can neighborhoods and cities offer to support the community and families?
4. After Marcus's sister dies, life is not easy for Marcus. 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? 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 Strategies

*(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 book 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 text. 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 book 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:  
<http://www.gregneri.com/home/#/chessrumble/>.
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 may also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

### Social Studies/Geography

*(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 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 to the principal or parent association 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 urban dialect and slang. 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 ([www.mauriceashley.com/](http://www.mauriceashley.com/)). 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?

### English Language Arts/Writing

(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 Integrative of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 9)

1. Have students examine how to create a character's voice by looking at the dialect and slang, 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 with the author, G. Neri, and illustrator, Jesse Joshua Watson, of *Chess Rumble* ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWoasXVRU-k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWoasXVRU-k)), G. Neri's interview on The Lowdown ([www.youtube.com/watch?t=59&v=SkZj9pfXqg8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?t=59&v=SkZj9pfXqg8)) and G. Neri's interview with Media Talk ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=brZRVDIznLo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=brZRVDIznLo)). 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? Encourage students to use their interview questions in a letter to send to G. Neri or Jesse Joshua Watson.
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 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 graduating from 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 ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=qHPpsU7aYHQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qHPpsU7aYHQ)). 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 ([www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/book-report-alternative-creating-c-30914.html](http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/book-report-alternative-creating-c-30914.html)).
7. Ask students to read the *School Library Journal* (SLJ) article about inspiring reluctant readers, featuring author G. Neri: [www.slj.com/2014/04/diversity/how-author-g-neri-and-librarian-kimberly-defusco-changed-a-life/#\\_](http://www.slj.com/2014/04/diversity/how-author-g-neri-and-librarian-kimberly-defusco-changed-a-life/#_). 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:

[www.readworks.org/lessons/grade6/keeping-night-watch-and-chess-rumble](http://www.readworks.org/lessons/grade6/keeping-night-watch-and-chess-rumble).

9. Ask students to write their own free verse or narrative free verse poems about bullying, loss, 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* ([www.leeandlow.com/books/2724](http://www.leeandlow.com/books/2724)) and *It Doesn't Have to Be This Way* ([www.leeandlow.com/books/2795](http://www.leeandlow.com/books/2795)), 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 each of the central characters learn to self regulate and face challenges?
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 ([www.dtw.org/the-challenge/instructions](http://www.dtw.org/the-challenge/instructions)). Student entries address how violence has affected their lives, the causes of youth violence, and what can they do about youth violence. Check out [www.dtw.org](http://www.dtw.org) for submission guidelines.

### Art/Media

(*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

([www.weburbanist.com/2009/09/24/graffiti-designs-styles-tagging-bombing-painting/](http://www.weburbanist.com/2009/09/24/graffiti-designs-styles-tagging-bombing-painting/))?

Encourage students to look at images of graffiti art online or, if possible, on structures in your town. 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 ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=KITEQZ5Sy4E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KITEQZ5Sy4E)). 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, Strand 2, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strand 7)

1. Encourage students to interview a parent or an adult mentor about a friend or someone close to them who has moved or passed away. How was this person important to them? Did they get a chance to say goodbye? How did they say goodbye? What did they do to feel better? What advice do they have for someone who have had a loved one move or pass away?

2. Have students talk to a parent or an adult mentor about their experiences with bullying. Were they bullied or 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. If possible, invite a parent, a guardian, or someone from the community to the classroom who plays chess. Help students brainstorm a list of questions to ask the guest: 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 playing. What is happening? How is the situation similar to or different from the scene described in *Chess Rumble*? Students should write about their observations and bring them to class to reflect in small groups.
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** is an award-winning writer, filmmaker, and new media producer from Los Angeles, where he also worked with inner-city youth. He is the recipient of the International Literacy Association Lee Bennett Hopkins Promising Poet Award and *Chess Rumble*, his free-verse novella, was recognized as an ALA Notable Children's Book. Another Lee & Low Books title by G. Neri, *Yummy: The Last Days of a Southside Shorty*, earned the Coretta Scott King Author Honor from the American Library Association and Cybils Award for Best Young Adult Graphic Novel. Prior to becoming a writer, Neri was a filmmaker, an animator/illustrator, a digital producer, and a founding member of *The Truth* anti-smoking campaign. Neri lives on the Gulf Coast of Florida with his wife and their daughter. Visit him on the web at [www.gregneri.com](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. Another Lee & Low Books title illustrated by Watson is *I and I Bob Marley*, which recognized as "100 Titles for Reading and Sharing" by the New York Public Library. 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. Chess battles are a favorite pastime. Visit him on the web at [www.jessewatson.com](http://www.jessewatson.com).

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\*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

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Guided Reading Level: T

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:  
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