

## David Bowles



**DAVID BOWLES** grew up and lives in the Río Grande Valley of South Texas. A many-faceted writer and scholar, he's the author of *Feathered Serpent*, *Dark Heart of Sky: Myths of Mexico*. His middle-grade fantasy *The Smoking Mirror* was selected as a 2016 Pura Belpré Author Honor by the American Library Association.



### *They Call Me Güero*

Twelve-year-old Güero is Mexican American, at home with Spanish or English and on both sides of the river. He's starting 7th grade with a woke English teacher who knows how to make poetry cool. In Spanish, "Güero" is a nickname for guys with pale skin, Latino or Anglo. But make no mistake: our red-headed, freckled hero is puro mexicano, like Canelo Álvarez, the Mexican boxer. Güero is also a nerd—reader, gamer, musician—who runs with a squad of misfits like him, Los Bobbys. Sure, they get in trouble like anybody else, and like other middle-school boys, they discover girls. Watch out for Joanna! She's tough as nails. But trusting in his family's traditions, his accordion and his bookworm squad, he faces seventh grade with book smarts and a big heart.

**Relevant Vocabulary:**

- Mexican American Literature
- Borderlands Poetry
- See glossary, pages 107-111
- Texas- Mexican Folklore
- Storytelling
- Community Cultural Wealth
- Colorism

**RRS connection to TEKS (4-5<sup>th</sup> grade): Please refer to TEKS for English Language Arts and Reading:**

- **Comprehension skills:** listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts.
- **Response skills:** listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts.
- **Author's purpose and craft:** listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts.
- **Composition I:** listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts--writing process.
- **Composition II:** listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts—genres.
- **Inquiry and research:** listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts.

**Pre-reading reflection and dialogue:**

- What does an author do?
- What does an editor do?
- Think about the title of this book? What does it tell us about this book of poetry?
- What do you know about poetry, middle grade books? Talk to your librarian and ask her to show you more examples of this genre.
- Think about the author's use of Spanish in his poetry. What do you think of this way of writing?
- How does this writing style make you feel?
- Look for information about David Bowles.

**While-reading engagement:**

- Look over the Table of Contents and select a few poems that sound interesting to you.
- Make a drawing to match the poems you've selected.
- You can also write your own poems using Mr. Bowles' titles.
- How about writing a poem using the title of one of the following poems: *Border Kid*, *Borderlands*, *Our House*, *Pulga Pantoum*, *They Call Me \_\_\_\_\_*, *La Mano Pachona*, *Ballad of the Mighty Tlacuach*, *Cascarón War*. You can write your own original poem using these titles or you can give your poem its own title.
- You can also talk about everything you notice in your favorite poem. Try to use all of your senses but do not lick the book! (Sounds, patterns of sounds, ideas, word pictures, descriptions, non-literal language, and visual arrangement).
- How do you feel about your favorite poem? Why is it your favorite?
- You can also look for information about: Folktales – Find folktales of the Rio Grande Valley.

**Post-reading and wrap-up:**

- Discuss the take-home message and form your own opinion. With your teacher's help, look for reviews of this book. For example, Publisher's Weekly and Kirkus Reviews. Do you agree or disagree with the reviews? Write, draw, or share your thoughts.
- Provide recommendations for future readers: Should other 4-5<sup>th</sup> graders read this book? What do you think?
- Make a welcome banner for David Bowles! Decorate it with photos and drawings of your favorite memory of your life in the beautiful, Rio Grande Valley.
- Prepare three questions you would like to ask David Bowles during his school visit.

**Useful links:**

- Author's website: <https://davidbowles.us/about/>
- Publisher's website: <http://www.cincopuntos.com/>
- Austin Public Library: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g28p7iEjHrQ>
- UTRGV: <https://www.utrgv.edu/newsroom/2019/10/31-the-devil-still-dances.htm>
- Kirkus Review: <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/david-bowles/they-call-me-guero/>