



# FREAKY FAST FRANKIE JOE

**LUTRICIA CLIFTON**

**GRADES 4–7**

## About the Book

This heartwarming debut novel will have readers cheering for twelve-year-old Frankie Joe Huckaby, whose determination and resiliency—and ultimately the loving support of his newfound family—help him through a big move and a devastating betrayal.

978-0-8234-2367-5 • PB: 978-0-8234-2867-0 • E-book available / Middle-Grade Fiction

## EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

#### Literature/Language Arts

**Questions for discussion/writing**—Students may discuss the following questions as a whole class or in pairs or small groups, or choose one or more about which to write.

- ❖ Frankie Joe had to adjust to a totally different life when he moved from Laredo, Texas, to Clearview, Illinois. Compare these two towns. How were they alike? How were they different? Think about the houses, streets, landscape, and people. You can also compare each of them with the place where you live. Of the three, where would you prefer to live? Why?
- ❖ Frankie Joe wasn't happy with his four half-brothers, and they weren't crazy about him. What were the turning points when his feelings changed toward each of them and their feelings changed toward him? How have you dealt with sibling rivalry in your own family, or how have any of your friends dealt with it? Why do you think jealousy exists between siblings?
- ❖ Frankie Joe was very homesick. Describe feelings of homesickness you may have had if you had to move from one place to another. Which things did you miss the most? Did you find any good substitutes? What made you eventually feel better?
- ❖ Mandy became a friend to Frankie Joe when he first went to school in Clearview. How did her friendship help him to adjust to the new town? What qualities do you look for in friends? Describe some instances when your friends have helped you.
- ❖ There was a lot of name-calling in the story. Do you think name-calling is ever a good idea—even if it's done “in fun”? Describe any experiences you have had with name-calling. How did it feel?
- ❖ Having a parent incarcerated like Frankie Joe's mom is a difficult situation for a kid. What kinds of skills do you think a kid needs in order to deal with such a situation? What is your opinion of the way that Frankie Joe handled it? What would you have done differently?
- ❖ Frankie Joe was saving his money to run away. Do you think running away was a good idea? Have you ever felt like running away? What changed your mind?
- ❖ Living in a blended family can be difficult. Frankie Joe felt he was being a traitor to his own mom because he liked his stepmom, Lizzie. Have you ever had similar feelings? How did you handle them?
- ❖ Frankie Joe tries to make Miss Peachcott understand that “a person sees what they want to see.” What does this phrase mean to you? What are some examples from your own life?

- ❖ Frankie Joe was hurt the most by the fact that his mom sold the quilt he had sent her in order to get money to relocate after she was released from jail. Are there any other things you think she could have done? How do you think Frankie Joe's relationship with his mom will be in the future?
- ❖ Frankie Joe has learned an appreciation of colors from his friend in Laredo, Mr. Lopez, and he describes everything he sees according to its color. At the end of the book, he talks about following "the road map of colors" that will take him home. You can describe (or draw) your own "road map of colors"—perhaps from your school to home, or to another place of your own choosing.

**Vocabulary**—Frankie Joe kept a collection of new words and their definitions on index cards. Students can do the same with new words that they encounter in reading or in conversation. They can find each new word in a dictionary and then write it down along with its definition.

## Geography

Students can plot the route that Frankie Joe and his dad traveled en route from Laredo to Clearview using a U.S. map. Places to look for are: Chihuahua, Mexico; Laredo, TX; Austin, TX; Oklahoma City, OK; St. Louis, MO; Chicago, IL; and Lake Michigan. (Clearview is a fictional

town, so they will have to estimate exactly where it is based on the description in the book.)

At the end of the story, Frankie Joe imagines that he is flying up to the North Pole, crossing Wisconsin, Alberta, Canada, and the Canadian Rockies until he gets to the Arctic Circle. Students can trace this imaginary journey on a globe of the world.

## Science

**Rocks**—Rocks play a part in Clifton's book, including granite, limestone, quartz, and sandstone. Students may find information on these types of rocks, their characteristics, where they can be found, and their appearance.

**Diseases**—Chickenpox and shingles are mentioned in the story. Students can find information on these in science dictionaries, health books, encyclopedias, or online.

## Research

Students may search for information on many terms mentioned in the story: Alberta clipper, the Chihuahua Desert, Corn Belt, farm machinery (tractor, harvester, spreader), Mesquite trees, the "Michelin Man", Oktoberfest, rocks (granite, limestone, quartz, sandstone).

## Online Resources

**Alberta Clipper**—[http://meteorology.geography-dictionary.org/Meteorology-and-Weather-Dictionary/ALBERTA\\_CLIPPER](http://meteorology.geography-dictionary.org/Meteorology-and-Weather-Dictionary/ALBERTA_CLIPPER) Presents a clear definition of this weather phenomenon.

**Oktoberfest**—<http://source.southuniversity.edu/oktoberfest-celebrations-around-the-world-55502.aspx> Presents a short history of this festival, which is now celebrated in many places.

Prepared by Sandy Schuckett, school library consultant



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Lutricia Clifton** was born in Oklahoma but moved frequently when she was growing up. She married and raised two sons in Colorado, where she earned a BA and an MA in English from Colorado State University. She now lives in northern Illinois, the setting of *Freaky Fast Frankie Joe*, her first book. For more about the author, visit [www.lutricia-lois-clifton.com/](http://www.lutricia-lois-clifton.com/).

3-13