

## A reader's guide to

# Gabriela

Gabriela McBride loves expressing herself—especially in the dance studio—but lately, poetry is becoming her art form of choice, and for good reason: Gabby struggles with stuttering, and spoken word poetry helps her speech flow more freely. Still, compared to how confident she feels on the dance floor, speaking up can be scary. When the city threatens to close her beloved community arts center, Gabby is determined to find a way to help.

1. Gabby writes a poem in which she compares her stuttering to riding on a rollercoaster: “Up, up, up and then racing to the ground/Words flying by me that I can’t pin down” (p. 11). What is something that doesn’t come easily for you?
2. The Liberty Arts Center is a place where Gabby grew up, surrounded by the arts. It’s a place that Gabby feels is “home” to her. What makes it feel like home to her? Where is a place that feels like home to you?
3. Gabby’s cousin Red says that spoken word poetry is an art form that springs from African traditions and can be found throughout many cultures in history (p. 31). People fighting for civil rights used it to express their anger and stand up for what they believed in. What is something you feel strongly about? How can you express yourself so others know what’s important to you?
4. Gabriela’s dad, a computer engineer, always says, “One person is only as strong as her network” (p. 32). It’s his favorite computer *metaphor*. A metaphor is a figure of speech that refers to one thing by mentioning another. In this case, he is comparing a computer network to a network of friends and family. Who is in your network?
5. In Chapter 4, Gabriela tries twice to speak up about helping The Liberty Arts Center, once to her principal (p. 40) and once to the Gifted Youth Group (p. 43). Both times her stuttering gets in the way of her words and her best friend Teagan speaks up for her. How does Gabby feel about this? How would you feel about this?
6. A girl in fifth grade gave Gabby a cruel nickname: Repeat, because she was always saying things more than once. Have you ever been given a nickname? Did you like it, or did you not like it? Why?
7. Gabriela’s mom says to leave fundraising for Liberty Arts to the grownups. But Gabriela and her friends want to help! What are some of the ways they do that?
8. Gabby works to gather signatures for a petition to save Liberty Arts. To do that, she has to talk to

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people she doesn't know, which always makes her stutter worse (p. 88). She's afraid to do it, but the Liberty Arts Center is so important to her that she does it anyway. When were you afraid to do something, but you did it anyway?

9. Gabby and her friends plan a dance performance in the park to raise funds for Liberty Arts (p. 121). They decide not to involve the adults in their plans and give the money they raise as a surprise donation to the grownups. What about this plan works well? What doesn't work so well?
10. Gabby and her friends think the power outage at the Liberty Center is all their fault, since they had all the stage lights on and were booting up a special graphics presentation on the computer (p.14). Turns out it wasn't really their fault—the wiring in the center was a disaster waiting to happen (p. 164). If they had known the outage wasn't their fault, do you think they would have tried as hard as they did to save Liberty Center?