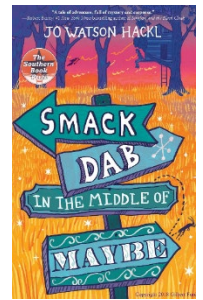


Jo Watson Hackl Author Visit Guide



I am the bestselling author of *Smack Dab in the Middle of Maybe* (Random House Children's Books/winner, Southern Book Prize/Amazon Teacher's Pick/"Read Across America" selection). I am also an award-winning researcher, a lawyer, and a first-generation college graduate. I've now presented to over 38,000



educators and other readers on a variety of topics listed below, and I love to collaborate with librarians and other educators to create new presentations to support your work. My passion is helping readers increase skills that promote grit and resilience, improve writing skills, and use time in nature to relax and recharge. I also love sharing the story of how writing changed my life and took me from the tiny rural ghost town where I grew up to Millsaps College, Yale Law School, and beyond. If writing can help me achieve my dreams, it can do the same for your readers. I am also a member of the Aspen Global Leadership Network and the Founder of [Outdoorosity.org](https://www.outdoorosity.org), a free resource for information and inspiration about nature. I love visiting libraries and classrooms across the United States and across the world. I've presented at the American Library Association Conference, the Children and Nature Network International Conference, the Fay B. Kaigler Conference, the International Association of School Librarianship Conference, the National Council of Teachers of English Conference, the Texas Library Association Conference, and numerous state educator conferences, nErDcamps, and book festivals. In short, I love to connect with people like you and your readers!

Free Author Visits for Book Purchases:

In-Person Visits: In lieu of charging an honorarium for presentations, I request that you purchase copies of *Smack Dab* from your local independent bookstore. If needed, I'm happy to work with your organization to obtain grants to cover book purchases and travel costs and to combine my visit with visits to other schools or organizations. I am also happy to work with schools with limited budgets.

Virtual Visits: Please contact me at Jo@JoHackl.com about arranging a low-cost virtual visit with the honorarium paid in book purchases. I also provide free virtual visits for Battle of the Books teams for states in which *Smack Dab* is on the Battle of the Books list.

Free Activities:

Working with experienced educators, my team and I have developed a bounty of free resources for educators and other readers, available at <https://johackl.com/activities/>:

- Building Grit Kits to help readers increase skills that promote grit, resilience, and social and emotional learning
- Writing and Revision Toolkit with a bookmark revision tool to help readers take their writing to the next level

- A Book Club Kit with Book Club discussion questions for young and older readers, a book-inspired playlist featuring Southern artists, and a Book Club menu featuring book-inspired recipes
- Summer Adventure Kit
- Educator's Guide and over 30 lesson plans
- Series of "Woods Time Adventures" to encourage engagement with the natural world
- Series of "Cricket Challenges" for readers to extend their reading experience into the real world, available on my [Youtube channel](#)
- Activity Guide with activities that can be performed in school, community, and home settings
- Book trailer
- An interactive map with links to the real places that inspired parts of *Smack Dab*
- A "hidden objects" search featuring items from the clue trail in *Smack Dab*
- Bookmarks with fun, free things to do outdoors and ways to make reading more fun
- An interactive clue trail challenge that readers can solve using things that they learned from the book; readers who solve the clue trail receive a printable clue solver's badge.

A Sampling of Presentation Topics:

I love to collaborate with educators and am happy to tailor a presentation to your needs or to help plan a whole-school or whole-community read or book fair activity. Here's a link to information about some of the activities on which I've collaborated with educators <https://johackl.com/activities/educators/using-smack-dab-in-the-classroom/>. In addition, below is a list of presentations I frequently give. Each of these can be presented in lecture or workshop format and I'm happy to tailor a presentation to your audience.

Writing and Revision Techniques that Really Work

Would you like to take your readers' writing to the next level? This session will equip you and your readers with tools and techniques to make their writing (both academic and creative) more powerful, more persuasive, and more fun. It also encourages readers to embrace revision as an integral part of the writing process. Handouts include a variety of writing prompts, brainstorming tools, tips to keep inspiration close at hand, and bookmark revision tools designed to be used for both creative writing and academic essays.

A Ghost Town, A Reclusive Artist, and a Poetry-Loving Dog: Drawing Inspiration from Real Life

Sometimes the best ideas for works of fiction come from real life. This session provides a behind-the-scenes look at the inspiration and research for *Smack Dab* and explores how participants can draw upon their own experiences to create characters who come alive, settings that feel lived-in, and plots that keep the reader engaged from the first page to the last word. The presentation and handouts include worksheets for mining personal experiences for character, setting and plot ideas, and tools and techniques to translate those ideas into stories that connect with readers.

Using the Power of Poetry to Improve Your Overall Writing

Poetry can be a powerful tool for readers to express their diverse perspectives, honor the perspectives of others, and improve overall writing skills. This session presents tips and techniques that poets use in their craft to brainstorm, create, and refine their work. The session also provides practical ways to help readers use poetic techniques to become more critical readers and to make their own writing stronger. Handouts include a revision tool to use the power of poetry to improve overall writing.

Explore Your Natural World through Cricket Challenges

Study after study has shown that spending time in nature can reduce stress, boost creativity, and improve well-being, and that readers benefit from making cross-curricular connections. But how do you inspire readers to use nature to make connections between their readings, their own world and STEAM subjects? This session presents a series of nature-based “Cricket Challenges,” nature-based activities designed to encourage curiosity and interaction with the natural world and to help readers make cross-curricular STEAM connections to fictional stories and non-fiction works. Handouts include Cricket Challenges to help readers explore their natural world.

Harnessing the Power of Nature to Make You Happier, More Creative, and Less Stressed

Research shows that engaging with nature makes readers happier, more creative, and less stressed, but how do you start? This session presents easy, free, and low-cost ways to make nature a part of every day. Handouts include free nature activities.

Becoming the Hero in Your Own Story with the Building Grit Kit

We all know that grit, resilience, and social-emotional awareness are key qualities for student success but how do we go about building them? This session introduces readers to the free “Building Grit Kit,” (developed and revised over five years in collaboration with experienced professionals) and primes readers for success. A version of the kit is available for both young readers and young adults. Each kit helps readers become the hero in their own story by setting personal goals, brainstorming potential obstacles to those goals, and developing strategies to help them navigate around those obstacles. Through the activities, readers identify their strengths and things they would like to work on. Readers also identify positive adult role models who can help them achieve their goals. They explore positive habits that they can build into their daily lives to help them become the best version of themselves. Each kit also includes team-building activities and nature activities to help readers explore their natural world and reduce stress. Handouts include the Building Grit Kit.

Engaging Your Curiosity to Take Your Writing to the Next Level

Curious readers are engaged learners. This session provides the backstory of how curiosity created a career and a novel. In the session I lead readers through an

exploration of things about which they are curious and, with handouts and activities, provide readers with a template to capture their ideas and map out next steps for turning their ideas into academic essays, research papers, and creative writing pieces.

Teaching STEAM through Fiction and Exploring Diverse Perspectives

Fiction is a rich resource to gain insight into diverse perspectives, experiences, and opinions and to promote social and emotional learning. Fiction also can be integrated into core content areas as part of STEAM studies to allow learners to develop literacy skills while making real-world connections to subject-area content. In this session, I present activities and resources to use *Smack Dab* to help learners explore STEAM content, make cross-curricular connections, extend their reading experience into the real world, and demonstrate knowledge and communicate new ideas in creative ways.

Making Books Come Alive with Music

We all know that readers learn in a variety of ways. In this session I help readers explore the book they are studying by creating a chapter-by-chapter playlist, with a narrative explaining the connection between the song and the chapter, and playlist artwork that relates to the overall theme of the book. I provide examples of each. Readers learn to critically examine each element in their book and song selections, and to write from the perspective of a music critic as they engage more deeply with the world of the book's characters and explore the setting, history, and culture that shaped the book characters' choices.

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Writing but Were Afraid to Ask

Now is the chance for your readers to get a behind-the-scenes look at the writing process. In this interactive session, I offer insights about lessons I've learned, mistakes I've made, and how my writing and revision process has evolved. I also answer student questions and brainstorm with readers about how to turn their ideas into polished pieces of work.

Ordering Books:

Teachers/librarians will be provided a PDF flyer with ordering instructions to send home with readers. I'm happy to personally autograph each book either before or at the event.

Technology Needs:

A projector, microphone, and screen.

Contact Information:

To arrange a school visit, you can contact me through my website at JoHackl.com. I look forward to visiting with you and your readers.