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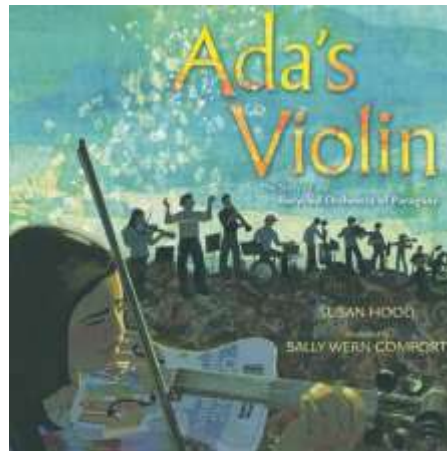


## *Ada's Violin:*

*The Story of the Recycled Orchestra of Paraguay*  
By Susan Hood, Illustrated by Sally Wern Comport

### *Curricular Resource*

*Designed by Erin Lierl, Tulane University*



### **Introduction**

This lesson plan is designed to accompany *Ada's Violin* by Susan Hood and illustrated by Sally Wern Comport. The lesson is appropriate for students in grade 3. The lesson is aligned to grade 3 standards: reading literature, writing, speaking, listening, and language.

The full lesson plan requires 80 minutes, but teachers can tailor the lesson to suit the needs of their classrooms.

### **Contents**

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### **Text synopsis and description:**

*Ada's Violin* tells the true story of Ada, a young girl from the slum of Cateura, Paraguay, who learns to play a violin made of trash. The story begins by describing life in Cateura, the site of a large garbage dump. Every day the trash comes and the recyclers go to work combing through it. Ada imagines the dump contains surprises. Ada's family are music lovers: her grandmother sings, her father tells stories of great musicians, and they listen to the radio together.

Ada becomes conscious of the limited opportunities available to her in the slum. Then, her grandmother signs her up for music lessons. However, there are not enough instruments for all the children who want to learn. The music teacher and other community members construct instruments from objects found in the dump.

Ada and the other children persevere through long practices in the heat to become accomplished musicians. Ada becomes first violin. The recycled orchestra travels to other cities and then other countries. They tour with a famous rock band and are received with enthusiasm.

The story is accompanied by colorful, collage-like illustrations. With a lexile level of 820, this book offers a reading level stretch for grade 3.

### **Required Materials:**

- A computer, projector, and internet connection (in order to play a Youtube video) are suggested but not required.
- Copies of the book or a document camera and projector.
- Student worksheets.
- Optional: recyclable and craft materials such as tissue boxes, rubber bands, tin cans, paint buckets, paper towel rolls, bottle caps, paper plates, pieces of cardboard, plastic bottles, egg cartons, newspaper and magazines, etc.

### **Lesson Plan:**

- Pre-reading task (20 min)
  - Teacher elicits ideas about ways the students have recycled:
    - “Are you a recycler? Have you ever found a use for something someone else threw away or didn’t want? For example, used paper can be re-used to make paper airplanes. Big cardboard boxes can be used as playhouses.”
    - Other examples: old bedsheets for costumes, buckets as drums, rag dolls from fabric scraps, papier maché from newspapers, rubber bands as slingshots, egg cartons as jewelry boxes, etc.
  - Students share their answers in pairs.
  - Teacher invites students to share their responses with the whole group.
  - Students write their answers on their worksheets (#1).
  - Teacher connects students’ experiences to the text, saying:
    - “The story we are going to read is about a recycled orchestra. What do you think a ‘recycled orchestra’ might be?” (Musical instruments made from recycled objects.)
- Reading for gist (15 min)
  - Teacher provides each student with a copy of the text or displays the text using a document camera.
  - Teacher guides students in reading the story.
  - Teacher models using context clues to determine the meaning of words and phrases.
  - Teacher asks students to think back to their favorite part of the story and consider why they liked this part.
  - Students share their answers in pairs.

- Students write their answers and their partners' answers on their worksheets (#2, #3).
- Recalling detail (10 min)
  - Teacher asks questions to elicit a more detailed plot summary:
    - Where did Ana live? (In a town near the garbage dump.)
    - How did the *gancheros* make money? (They recycled cardboard and plastic.)
    - What did Ada imagine about the garbage trucks? (They were full of surprises.)
    - What did Ada's Grandmother like to do? (Sing rock n roll.)
    - What kind of stories did Ada's father tell? (Stories about musicians.)
    - What was Ada's new responsibility when she and her sister started school? (To take care of her sister.)
    - What did Ada see in the town? (Older kids grumbling and joining gangs.)
    - Why was Ada worried? (She was worried about the future.)
    - What was the problem with the music class? (There weren't enough instruments.)
    - How did the adults solve the problem? (They made instruments from trash.)
    - What was it like learning to play music together? (It was hard work.)
    - How did the music change the mood in the town? (It made things nicer.)
    - How did Ada feel when she played the violin? (Happy, like her true self, proud.)
    - How did the crowd react to the orchestra at the rock concert? (They cheered for them.)
- Identifying theme: (15 min)
  - Teacher defines theme: "The theme is the main message of the story. It is found throughout the story. Sometimes, it's a lesson the author wants the reader to learn. It's the reason the author wrote the story."
  - Teacher opens the book to the third illustration, which shows Ada imagining treasures in the garbage dump. Teacher elicits details about this image:
    - What does Ada imagine about the trash? (It has surprises in it.)
    - What kind of surprises is Ada thinking about? (Jewelry, toys, etc.)
    - How do people normally think about trash? (It's dirty, they don't want it.)
    - What else that is special that is found in an unexpected place? (Ada finds her true self when she plays the violin, musical instruments are found in the landfill, the children find pride in themselves within, etc.)
  - Teacher invites students to write the theme as a general statement, as in the example:
    - "Things that seem worthless sometimes have value."
  - Students complete #4 on their worksheets.
- Small Group Discussion (15 min)
  - Students break into small groups and discuss questions #3-6 on their worksheets, connecting the problems in Cateura to problems in their own community, and brainstorming possible solutions.
  - Small groups share their responses with the whole group.

- Watch the trailer (including a glimpse of the real Ada and her violin) at <http://www.landfillharmonicmovie.com/> (5 min)
- Roleplay/writing (30 minutes)
  - Teacher tells students to work in pairs. Imagine that one partner is a student in the recycled orchestra. They should consider. The other is a reporter interviewing the musician. They are going to write out the script of their interviews, including the questions and the answers. Some questions to consider are:
    - What instrument they play
    - What it's made out of
    - What their life was like in Cateura before the orchestra
    - How they got involved in the orchestra
    - How their life changed after playing in the orchestra
    - Their advice to other children living in difficult situations
    - Their future plans
  - Teacher invites student pairs to perform their interview for the whole group
- Recycled Instruments (30 min)
  - Provide stations with craft/recyclable materials for students to make their own musical instruments. Allow 15-20 minutes for students to create their instrument, then arrange students in a circle. Play a pre-recorded piece of music and invite students to play their instruments over the music in an improvisational jam.

## Standards Alignment: Grade 3 English Language Arts

### ***Reading Literature***

#### **Key Ideas and Details**

1. Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.
2. Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.
3. Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

#### **Craft and Structure**

4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from non-literal language.
5. Refer to parts of stories, dramas, and poems when writing or speaking about a text, using terms such as chapter, scene, and stanza; describe how each successive part builds on earlier sections.
6. Distinguish the student's point of view from that of the narrator or those of the characters.

### ***Reading Standards for Foundational Skills***

#### **Fluency**

4. Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.
  - a. Read on-level texts with purpose and understanding.
  - b. Read on-level prose and poetry orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings.
  - c. Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.

### ***Writing***

#### **Text Types and Purposes**

3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.
  - Establish a situation and introduce a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
  - Use dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events or show the response of characters to situations.
  - Use temporal words and phrases to signal event order.
  - Provide a sense of closure.

#### **Production and Distribution of Writing**

4. With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to the task and purpose.

### ***Speaking and Listening***

#### **Comprehension and Collaboration**

1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.
  - Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).
  - Ask questions to check understanding of information presented, stay on topic, and link their comments to the remarks of others.
  - Explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.
2. Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

### **Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas**

4. Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.
6. Speak in complete sentences when appropriate to task, audience, and situation in order to provide requested detail or clarification.

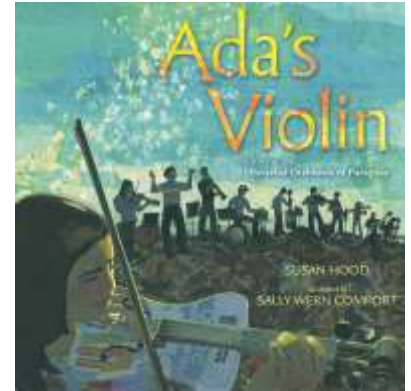
### **Language**

#### **Vocabulary Acquisition and Use**

4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning word and phrases based on grade 3 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
  - a. Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
  - b. Determine the meaning of the new word formed when a known affix is added to a known word (e.g., *agreeable/disagreeable*, *comfortable/uncomfortable*, *care/careless*, *heat/preheat*).
  - c. Use a known root word as a clue to the meaning of an unknown word with the same root (e.g., *company*, *companion*).
  - d. Use glossaries or beginning dictionaries, both print and digital, to determine or clarify the precise meaning of key words and phrases.
5. Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.
  - a. Distinguish the literal and non-literal meanings of words and phrases in context (e.g., *take steps*).
  - b. Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., describe people who are friendly or helpful).
6. Distinguish shades of meaning among related words that describe states of mind or degrees of certainty (e.g., *knew*, *believed*, *suspected*, *heard*, *wondered*). Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate conversational, general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal spatial and temporal relationships (e.g., *After dinner that night we went looking for them*).

*Ada's Violin* Student Worksheet

Name \_\_\_\_\_



**Think before you read:**

1. **Do you recycle?** Have you ever found a use for something someone else had thrown away? If so, what was it? What did you do with it?

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2. After reading *Ada's Violin*, think back on one of your favorite parts. What was it? Why did you like it?

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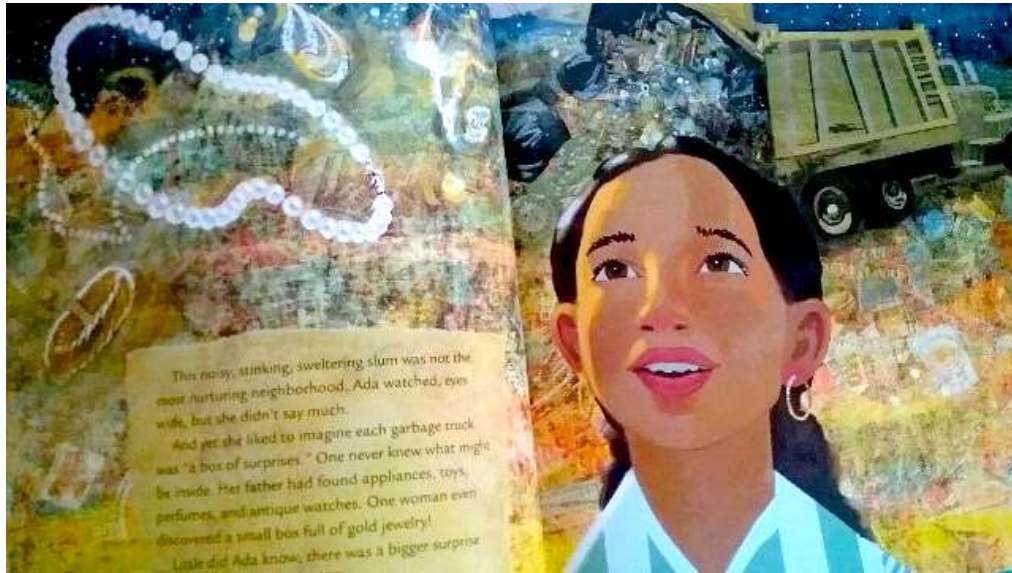
3. Find out about a partner's favorite part of the story. Why do they like that part?

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4. Identifying Theme:



**"One never knew what might be inside."**

This moment gives us a hint about the **theme** of the story. What other parts of the story show the reader the same theme? Think about finding something special in an unexpected place.

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5. What is the theme of the story? Explain it in your own words.

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6. What other stories do you know with the same theme, or a similar theme?

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**Group discussion:**

7. Think about Ada’s community. What were some problems the children faced?

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8. How did the recycled orchestra solve the children’s problems?

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9. Think about your own community. What problems do children face?

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10. What could your community do to solve these problems?

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**Role play:**

11. In pairs, imagine that one of you is a musician in the recycled orchestra. You are famous now, and a reporter is going to interview you for a video. Together, plan questions and answers. Be sure to include information about your instrument, why the orchestra is important to you, and what you plan to do in the future. Prepare to perform your interview for the class.

Reporter:

\_\_\_\_\_?  
\_\_\_\_\_?

Musician:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Reporter:

\_\_\_\_\_?  
\_\_\_\_\_?

Musician:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Reporter:

\_\_\_\_\_?  
\_\_\_\_\_?

Musician:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.