



TeachersFirst READING TREKS

Ada's Violin:

The Story of the Recycled Orchestra of Paraguay

Teacher Guide

Grade Level & Content Areas

Access Reading
Trek Map

Ages: 4–8

Grades: PreK–3

Reading Level: 4th grade

Lexile Measure: 820L

Guided Reading Level: P

Developmental Reading

Assessment (DRA): 34–38

Content Areas: English/language arts, reading, literature, math, music and the performing arts, ecology, and social studies (including individual development, identity, and geography).

Synopsis of Book

In this uniquely illustrated book, Susan Hood shares the life-changing true story of how learning to play music transformed the lives of children and teens living on the edge of a landfill just outside Paraguay's capital city. When former musician and music teacher Favio Chávez relocates to Asunción to train landfill workers in safety practices, he sees that the children of Cateura desperately need something besides drugs and gangs to occupy their time and decides to offer them music lessons. Without sufficient instruments for the growing interest, Chávez and some of the local landfill workers begin to create orchestra instruments from materials found in the landfill. These odd-looking pieces create beautiful sounds just as if constructed by master craftsmen. With practice, dedication, and their teacher's guidance, these music students blossom to become performers. As the story unfolds, new challenges arise, such as the need for passports when the young orchestra is invited to travel and perform in other nations. Children who once had no hope beyond picking recyclable materials from the landfill now aspire to so much more. This story has spread globally through the media and the internet, and now new students benefit from donated instruments and mentoring and higher-level instruction from professional musicians.

Standards

Common Core State Standards for K–5

Reading: Literature

- Key Ideas and Details
- Craft and Structure

Writing

- Text Types and Purposes
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge

Common Core State Standards for 6–12

Reading: Literature

- Key Ideas and Details
- Craft and Structure
- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Writing

- Text Types and Purposes
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics

Algebra

- Understand patterns, relations, and functions

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

- Theme 1: CULTURE
- Theme 2: TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE
- Theme 3: PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENTS

National Core Arts Standards for Visual Arts

- Creating
- Responding

National Core Music Standards

- Creating

Next Generation Science Standards

- Earth and Human Activity

Social Justice Standards

- Identity
- Diversity

Using a TeachersFirst® Reading Trek to Explore This Book

TeachersFirst Reading Treks create a virtual field trip of resources about a piece of literature or a text using the My Maps feature of Google Maps. To motivate and enrich student reading, teachers and students can reference this visual collection of web resources and images as they relate to the contents of a book.

TeachersFirst has done the hard work for you! Use the activities in this teacher guide and the accompanying [Reading Trek map](#) as you and your students explore this book. And, if you feel inspired, you (or your students) can create your own Reading Trek about this or another book!

Using This Reading Trek in Class

Below is a list of ideas for how to use this Reading Trek in your educational setting.

Working with the Map:

1. Introduce the book to the class on an interactive whiteboard using the Reading Trek map and highlighting its various layers.
2. As either a whole class, small group, or individual activity, compare and contrast the culture and daily life of the people of Cateura, Paraguay, to that of the community served by the local school. Students may also opt to compare and contrast their own families. Use this ReadWriteThink Interactive ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to easily create and edit a Venn Diagram and download it as a PDF.
3. Create a K-W-L chart about modern landfills and discuss the “K” (known) and “L” (learning hopes) sections. You could record this discussion and share it on the class or school website. Next, take a virtual field trip to a recycling center and a modern landfill at Recycling Education & At-Home Activities ([TeachersFirst review](#)) and Earth911 ([TeachersFirst review](#)) for inspiration regarding recycling and conservation. Check out the downloadable activities and share them with students’ families. Identify landfills in the area, past or present, and generate follow-up questions to ask the landfill’s customer relations staff. Students will also enjoy learning as they play the games at Recycle City ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
4. Learning to play music and sharing it with others in concert format dramatically changed the way the children and teens of Cateura and nearby communities saw themselves. The video “[Landfill Harmonic](#)” tells how this group came to be and introduces several musicians and their instruments. Have students reflect on an activity, person, or situation that changed how they saw themselves for the better. After writing a reflective essay or journal entry, they can create a piece of visual or literary art to honor what or who brought them to be better.
5. Creating Orff instruments can be a fun classroom activity that reinforces both music and math lessons. Orff instruments include many percussive instruments such as castanets, maracas, tambourines, woodblocks, and small drums, and their use in playing patterns of sounds reinforces computational thinking. After viewing the videos for the lesson [Recycle and Repurpose: Use Found Objects to Create Musical Instruments](#) ([TeachersFirst review](#)), teachers and volunteers (or even older students) can guide children through making various percussive instruments from items that would typically be thrown away as

trash. The class can use their instruments to create several mathematical patterns of increasing difficulty.

6. Establish a “Don’t Throw That Away” mindset and a station for clean metal cans without sharp edges, clean plastic and glass containers, paper tubes from paper towels and toilet tissue, cloth and paper scraps, and other materials that can be used for art and maker activities. Leftover paper plates and other party supplies would make good additions. You can make this a school-wide activity by encouraging families.
7. Explore the decomposition of items commonly discarded in the trash. Partially fill two plastic tubs or small fish tanks with garden soil. Add items such as bread crust and other food

items, paper and plastic cups, a tissue, a nail, cloth, etc. to both containers, then add earthworms to only one container. Add a bit of water just to moisten the soil in both, then cover them loosely so that some air may be exchanged. Observe and record changes over two weeks or longer. “[How Long It Takes for Trash to Break Down](#)” is a fun video that depicts a decomposition timeline. Teachers can use Wordwall ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to create a matching game that connects landfill items with their decomposition time. Use the templates on the site to implement this activity both before as an introduction to the video and afterward as an assessment of understanding.

Extension Activities:

1. There are several reasons many, if not most, adults and family units do not recycle items that end up in landfills. Use Coggle ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to generate and share a mind map of reasons why members of the community are hesitant to recycle by creating branches coming off the main idea in the center. Have small groups of students choose a reason to debunk, then use Adobe Creative Cloud Express for Education ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to make an infographic with information found in a list of resources gathered in Wakelet ([TeachersFirst review](#)) and shared on the class or school website. Students can use their research to create scripts and record videos where they simplify and promote recycling using Vmaker ([TeachersFirst review](#)). (This activity can also serve as an assessment.)
2. View the Crash Course Ecology ([TeachersFirst review](#)) videos “5 Human Impacts on the Environment (#10),” “Pollution (#11),” and “Conservation and Restoration

Ecology (#12),” then watch “[What is Ecosystem Restoration?](#)”. Discuss potential methods for revitalizing damaged or suffering ecosystems following a natural or manmade disaster, or just years of overuse. Research local restoration projects and consider a volunteer field trip. Create a collage using leftover materials and scraps that depicts a clean, healthy environment in the biome of the student’s choice. Draft guidelines that students can share with local residents to help protect area ecosystems and use Canva Infographic Maker ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to generate infographics to share.

3. Learning to store food properly lengthens its shelf life and makes it less likely to be thrown out. Introduce Your Plan, Your Planet ([TeachersFirst review](#)), then assign students the task of learning how to cut down on wasted food, water, and energy, as well as reducing trash. Students can keep a log of water consumption and kitchen waste at home and write a plan to share with their families.

4. Explore playing various instruments on Virtual Musical Instruments ([TeachersFirst review](#)). Record the sounds using a mobile phone or use Zight/CloudApp ([TeachersFirst review](#)) for a 90-second recording. Visit Mutopia ([TeachersFirst review](#)) for sheet music.
5. Visit and view some of [Sally Wern Comport's](#) illustrations, then have students write a short story or paragraph to accompany the picture. Students can share their stories or paragraphs and have others try to match it to the corresponding image.

Helpful Resources

From TeachersFirst:

- [TeachersFirst CurriConnects Book List - Maps](#)
- [TeachersFirst Review of Google My Maps](#)
- [OK2Ask: Engage & Inspire with Reading Treks](#)

Other Resources:

- [Susan Hood](#)
- [Sally Wern Comport](#)
- [Simon & Schuster Common Core Curriculum Guide](#)
- [Book-It Repertory Theatre Study Guide](#)
- [60 Minutes-The Recyclers: From Trash Comes Triumph](#)
- [Life of a Can Video and Activities](#)
- [Recycling: Keep America Beautiful](#)
- [EPA's Quest for Less: Activities and Resources for Teaching K-8](#)
- [Mixed Curbside Residential Recycling Myths](#)
- [Toys from Trash](#)
- [Instruments of the Orchestra](#)
- [Violin Online](#)
- [Merry Christmas featuring Ada Rios](#)