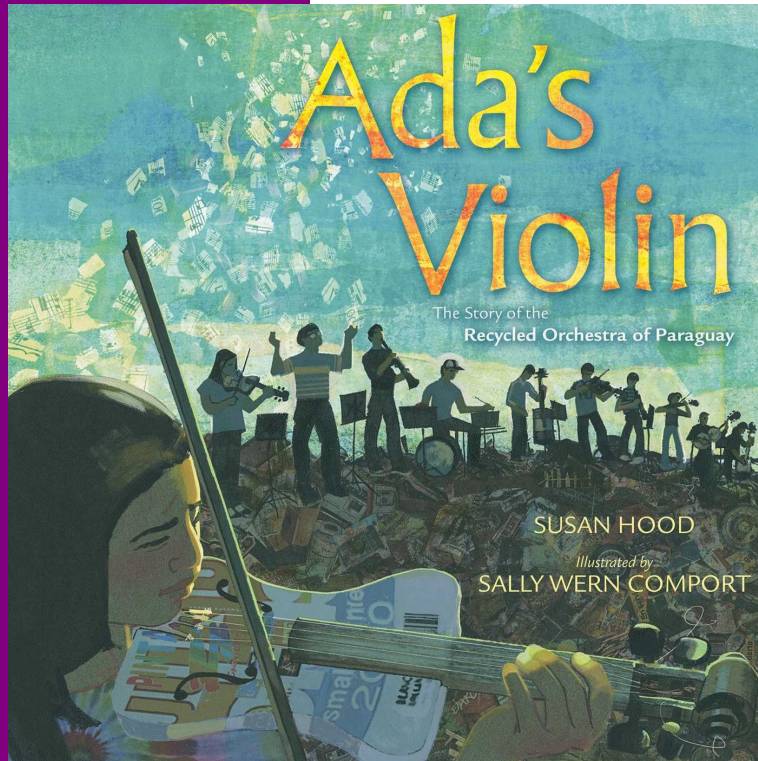


Ada's Violin

The Story of the Recycled Orchestra of Paraguay



Susan Hood | Sally Wern Comport (Illustrator)

From award-winning author Susan Hood and illustrator Sally Wern Comport comes the extraordinary true tale of the Recycled Orchestra of Paraguay, an orchestra made up of children playing instruments built from recycled trash.

Ada Ríos grew up in Cateura, a small town in Paraguay built on landfill. She dreamed of playing the violin, but with little money for anything but the bare essentials, it was never an option ... until a music teacher named Favio Chávez arrived. He wanted to give the children of Cateura something special, so he made them instruments out of materials found in the trash. It was a crazy idea, but one that would

leave Ada—and her town—forever changed. Now, the Recycled Orchestra plays venues around the world, spreading their message of hope and innovation.

About the author: Susan Hood has written more than 200 picture books. She has received starred reviews in *Publishers Weekly* and *Booklist*, and her book *Spike, The Mixed-Up Monster* won the

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Study notes written by
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2013 International Latino Award and was selected for the Charlotte Zolotow Highly Commended List. *The Tooth Mouse* was named a 2013 Best Book of the Year by Bank Street and the Cooperative Children's Book Center. Prior to becoming an author, Susan was a children's magazine editor at Scholastic and *Instructor Magazine*, a book editor at *Sesame Workshop*, and the Children's Content Director of *Nick Jr. Magazine*. *Ada's Violin* is her latest nonfiction picture book. Visit her at www.SusanHoodBooks.com/Home.

About the illustrator: Sally Wern Comport has illustrated numerous picture books and novels, including *Love Will See You Through: Martin Luther King Jr.'s Six Guiding Beliefs*; Brave *Margaret: An Irish Adventure*; *Hanging Off Jefferson's Nose: Growing Up on Mt. Rushmore*; and the *Spy Mice* series. She has also translated her picture making skills to various large scale public, private, and institutional artworks. Sally lives with her husband and two daughters in Annapolis, Maryland, where she operates Art at Large Inc. Learn more at www.ArtAtLargeInc.com.

STUDY NOTES

- Using a musical list-building service such as Spotify, create a playlist for *Ada's Violin* to listen to as you study this book. Include the rock 'n' roll songs from the 1960s that Ada's *abuela* loves to sing along to.
- Read only the opening line of the book as a class: 'Ada Rios grew up in a town made of trash.' Why is this a powerful introduction to *Ada's Violin*? Why do you think the author uses the word 'trash', rather than 'garbage' or 'landfill'? What do you imagine Ada's town of Cateura looks like? What clues does the illustration provide?

- Now turn the page to the following spread. Do you find this illustration overwhelming? Why/why not? How does Sally's colour palette in this illustration convey the hodgepodge of garbage?
- What materials can be recycled? How do we recycle in Australia? Why do you think Cateura does not have a designated recycling plant, rather than having the *gancheros* sort through mountains of rubbish? Take a moment to discuss the cycle of poverty, as indicated, for example, by the 'going rates' for recyclable material that Susan Hood mentions, How can poverty trap whole communities into less-than-ideal situations? Look, for example, at what happens to the teenagers in Cateura who grow discontented with their surroundings and get into gang fights. Is this only a factor in the developing world? What can be done to break the cycle of poverty?
- Research the Recycled Orchestra further (a good place to start is this short video on YouTube www.youtube.com/watch?v=yYbORpgSmjg). How has the introduction of music enriched the lives of children in the slum and given them new options in life that they previously had no access to? Can you think of other similar projects that use music and the arts to rehabilitate or inspire disadvantaged communities? Some examples include the Choir of Hard Knocks and Gareth Malone's The Choir. Even in situations of hardship, do you think it's important to have access to the arts? Explain your answer.
- What is landfill? What are some of the environmental challenges that landfill presents? What are some alternatives to landfill sites? What happens to landfill sites in the developed world? How is this different to the 'trash town' of Cateura and other similar towns in developing countries?
- Ada's father has found appliances, toys and antiques in the garbage. What might this indicate

about the way we waste resources when we dispose of things that are no longer useful to us? What could be an alternative to simply throwing away things we don't want? In small groups, investigate organisations such as Reverse Garbage (www.reversegarbage.org.au) that try to repurpose and reuse items that might otherwise end up in landfill.

- As a class, listen to Benjamin Britten's *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* as an introduction to orchestral music and instruments. Talk about the different sections of an orchestra and some of the key roles within it, such as the conductor, the concertmaster and the first violin. Why are these roles important? Divide the class into four groups and allocate one of the following instrument families for them to investigate further:

- ◆ woodwinds
- ◆ brass
- ◆ percussion
- ◆ strings.

Ask each group to find examples of some of the instruments that belong to their designated family and what characterises the music produced by that family. Ask the groups to explain to the rest of the class how the instruments in each family produce music (eg passing air over reeds or resonating the vibration of the musician's lips).

- Traditional musical instruments are costly to make and maintain. Pick one instrument from the activity above and think about how you could reproduce the same sounds using repurposed everyday materials as Nicolás Gómez does.
- What kind of book is *Ada's Violin*? It tells a true story, but it also represents a personal, stylised

narrative from the point of view of one character and uses illustrations rather than photography. Is it nonfiction? Is it a biography? Is it fiction? Can these generic definitions be considered fluid? Do you find that fluidity helpful or confusing? Explain your answer.

- The artwork in *Ada's Violin* is a combination of composite collage and painted illustration. How does this artistic style suit a story about the Recycled Orchestra? Why? What details can you identify in the pieces of collage that add depth and meaning to the illustration (eg the shreds of musical scoresheets on the final spread)?
- How does the colour palette in *Ada's Violin* change as Ada begins to play in the orchestra? How does this reflect the story's themes of hope and innovation?
- 'Buried in the trash was music.' How does this sentence contrast to the stark opening line of *Ada's Violin*? What are the literal and symbolic meanings of this sentence? How can it be seen as a thematic statement that characterises the whole book?