

PS 39 Diversity and Inclusion Book of the Month: January

Theme: Socioeconomic Difference

Book Title: Ada's Violin: The Story of the Recycled Orchestra of Paraguay
By Susan Hood

Grade Level: 4th / 5th

Book Summary:

Ada Ríos grew up in Cateura, a small town in Paraguay built on a 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.

Discussion Questions:

- If you walked around the town of Cateura, what do you think you would see, hear, and smell?
- What did Ada's grandmother Mirian teach her about music? What did her father teach her?
- Favio Chávez changed Ada's life. How did she spend her time before he arrived? How did she spend time after he arrived? What did he teach her about music and respect?
- In order to create the Recycled Orchestra, Favio Chávez had to solve several problems. Explain how he solved the following problems:
 - Problem #1: There were not enough instruments for the children.
 - Problem #2: It wasn't safe for the children to have expensive instruments.
 - Problem #3: There were no classrooms.
 - Problem #4: The children struggled as they learned to play their instruments.
- Explain the meaning of the following sentence: "A symphony of sound helped to lift them [the gancheros] beyond the heat, the stench, and their aching backs." In what ways did the music lift them?
- What did the children in the Recycled Orchestra discover at the end of their performance with a world famous rock band? How do the words and illustrations show this?
- Favio Chávez said, "The world sends us garbage. We send back music." What does he mean by this?
- Why do you think the author chose Ada's Violin as the title of the book? How does Ada's story help you understand the story of the Recycled Orchestra?
- If you could ask Ada some questions, what would they be?
- In the beginning of the book the author tells us: Little did Ada know, there was a bigger surprise waiting for her in the landfill. At the end of the book the author reveals the surprise not only for Ada, but for all the kids in the Recycled Orchestra. The author writes: They had discovered the surprise waiting in the landfill. Buried in the trash was music. And buried in themselves was something to be proud of. Why do you think the author wrote about a surprise in the landfill at both the beginning and the end of the book?
- In several places in the book, the words and the illustrations show how Ada changed from a girl who imagined a better life to a girl who is now living a better life. How did Ada change? Explain some events that led to this change.
- Favio Chávez gave the children in the Recycled Orchestra this advice as they began to work together: "Be kind, always say please and thank you, say you're sorry, be dedicated when you commit to something." What is your opinion of this advice? Do you agree? Why?

