

Sol Plays the World **Teaching Notes**

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SYNOPSIS:

There are times when Sol finds his emotions to be overwhelming, so he turns to a diverse collection of musical instruments to find peace. Through exploring global sounds, Sol learns to express and manage his feelings in a creative way, and he develops an inner connection to people and communities from around the world. This calming story, with unique thoughtful illustrations, demonstrates the importance music can have on our emotions and the positive effect it can have on our well-being.

In the Classroom

Before Reading:

Discuss what is seen on the cover:

- Introduce the book by looking at the cover:
 - What do we notice about the character on the cover?
- Look at the musical instruments:
 - What instruments can be seen?
 - What sounds could they make?
- What do you think this story will be about?
 - Why do children think this?
- How does the cover make children feel?
 - Why is this?

Additional cover discussion:

- Do any children share the same letters from the title in their name?
- What colours can be seen on the cover?
- How many stars can you count?

During Reading:

Questions to ask children during the story:

Emotions:

- Sol is happy when he rides his bike, jumps on his trampoline, or spends time with his family:
 - Ask children about activities that make them happy.
 - Why is this?
- There are some things that make Sol upset:
 - How does Sol feel during the story?
 - What makes Sol upset during the story?
 - Ask children about what makes them feel sad/frustrated/angry.
 - Why do they feel this?

Music:

- What sound do children think the instruments would make?
 - Yidaki
 - Siku
 - Djembe
 - Balalaika
 - Gong
 - Clapper sticks

Reflection:

- How does music help Sol?
 - Why do children think this?
 - What might Sol be imagining while playing music?

After Reading:

- What does Sol do to help how he is feeling?
 - Why do music/musical instruments help Sol?
- Can children think of a time when they felt like Sol?
 - What happened?
 - What methods do children use to overcome a feeling of anger/frustration?

- Can children remember the names of any of the instruments?
 - Where do they come from?
 - Why do children think the instruments come from different countries?
 - What can we learn from listening to music from around the world?
- What do children think it might mean by Sol feeling “connected” to the world around him?

Personal Experiences/Reflection:

- Do children play or know someone who plays a musical instrument?
 - What instrument is it?
 - What sound does it make?
 - How does this make them feel?
- What other instruments can children think of?

Classroom Activities:

- Musical instrument circle time – Provide a range of different instruments. Children can choose their favourite instrument and play it. Encourage children to talk about the sound and how it makes them feel. Ask children to play at different tempos and hard/soft (forte/piano).
- Cultural Music Day – Using online resources or other relevant material, provide examples of music and instruments from different countries. Discuss the instruments, the sounds they make, and the environment in which they are played.
- Instruments and the world – Discuss the different countries where instruments can be found. Using a map of the world, children can draw their favourite instruments that can then be placed on the map.
- Create your own instruments – Provide classroom resources for children to create their own musical instruments. Ideas can include drums, elastic band guitars/zither, shakers, etc.
- Feelings charades – Children can act out different emotions for others to guess. This would create a better awareness of recognising the emotions of others.
- Musical instrument calm corner – Using quieter instruments, add them to a calm corner for children to use if feeling overwhelmed.

About the Author:

Chelsey Reis is a writer and artist who lives between Regional Victoria and Far North Queensland. Chelsey previously worked for Local Government and Community Service Organisations empowering children, youth, and community across disability advocacy, community arts, and place-based projects. She has since home educated her two children, following a philosophy that integrates permaculture, regenerative practice, creative exploration, and community participation. Her writing spans from narrative essays to children’s picture books that explore and celebrate diversity, creativity, and connection to people and places.

About the Illustrator:

Mirjam Siim was born and raised in Tallinn, Estonia. Since earning a degree from Tartu Art College, Estonia, Mirjam has worked as a freelance illustrator and artist. Working on a range of different projects, Mirjam has exhibited work throughout Europe and the US. She enjoys working in watercolor and is often inspired by moments from her own life — conversations had, books read, or memories shared. Mirjam currently lives in Porto, Portugal.