

The Cello of Mr. O

Book by Jane Cutler

Unit study prepared by Debbie Palmer

Social Studies

Geography

Although the author doesn't let us know where the story takes place, there is still a chance to study geography. The little girl's dad mentions many places where materials come from to make the cello. Take this opportunity to go over the location of the following places. Use the maps here to find these places and color them in. You can also locate the capitals of the countries with the maps provided.

Germany- a northern European country. Its capital is Berlin.

France- a southern European country. Its capital is Paris.

Honduras- a Central American country. Its capital is Tegucigalpa (pronounced...Tay-goo-see-gall-pah)

Ceylon-This is the island nation of Sri Lanka. It was known as Ceylon before 1972. Because of this we can assume that maybe our story takes place before 1972, which means it could possibly be World War I or II. Sri Lanka is off the southern coast of India. Its capital is Colombo.

Brazil- a South American country. Its capital is Brasilia.

Africa-a continent

Emotions (anger and fear)

The little girl in the story talks about how she experiences fear and anger all the time because of the war. Fear can paralyze us and make it so that we don't know what to do or how to act. Anger can cause us to react in ways (yelling, being mean, etc.) that we later will regret. How does the little girl in the story handle her fear? She pretends that the tracer fire and the mortars are shooting stars and meteors. She listens to Mr. O's music. She sees the courage of Mr. O which makes her less afraid. How does she handle her anger? One positive way she handles her anger is through listening to the music. One negative way, is how she and the other

children get back at Mr. O by popping paper bags by his door. How can your child handle anger and fear? Discuss various options.

The Red Cross

Notice the relief truck is from the Red Cross. The Red Cross was the inspiration of Henry Dunant, a Swiss man. During a trip to Italy in 1859, Dunant witnessed the Battle of Solferino. He was horrified to see the aftermath of the battle and that there was no aid for those that had fallen. He organized the women and the children of the area to provide aid to those injured soldiers. After returning from Italy, he wrote A Memory of Solferino, which described his experiences. He later went on to help create the organization of the Red Cross, whose main objectives were to bring aid to the sick and wounded regardless of their nationality. The international symbol of the Red Cross is a white background with a red cross. This symbol was taken from the flag of Switzerland, Henry Dunant's birthplace. It is basically the reverse of the Swiss flag. The Swiss flag is a red background with a white cross. Have your student find Switzerland on a map.

Clara Barton

The relief truck comes every week. What organization runs the relief trucks? The Red Cross (see above lesson for more information). This might be a good time to learn more about the founder of the American Red Cross. Clarissa Harlowe Barton (who always wanted to be called Clara) was born on Christmas Day in 1821. She was educated at home. During the Civil War, Clara risked her life to bring supplies and support to soldiers out on the battlefield. She eventually earned the nickname, "Angel of the Battlefield" for her efforts during the war. After the war, she was involved in searching for missing persons/prisoners from the war. She also set up a national cemetery for the Union prisoners of the Andersonville Prison in Georgia. She then went on to start the American Red Cross and run it for 23 years. She died on April 12, 1912.

Pastimes

How do the children spend their time in the story? They play cards, word games, read, draw, talk, play jacks, and listen to Mr. O's music! Does your child know how to play jacks? Maybe get a ball and jacks and play with him/her. You also could teach them a new card game or how to play some word games (hangman, scrabble, apples to apples, etc.).

Language Arts

Vocabulary

Tracer fire- ammunition that contains a chemical substance that causes a projectile to trail smoke or fire so to make the path visible. This helps soldiers see if the ammunition is hitting the target.

Mortars- a portable, muzzle-loading cannon used to fire shells at low speeds and high into the air.

Scarce- rare or seldom found

Mocking tone- mimicking tone that is meant to ridicule someone

Rubble- bits and pieces of something, normally buildings

Rosin- a yellowish to dark substance from the sap of pine trees used on the bows of certain stringed instruments

Deserted- abandoned, no people around

Besieged- surrounded by hostile forces

Hobbles- to walk with difficulty or a limp

Fusillade- a number of weapons being fired at the same time or in quick succession

Word Origins

Ask your student what is strange about the word “cello” and the way it is spelled and pronounced. According to English phonics rules, “cello” should be pronounced /sell-o/. Why is there a “ch” sound at the beginning of the word if there is no “ch”? (This also happens with the word, cellist.) The words “cello” and “cellist” come from Italian. According to Italian phonics, if you have a single “c” before an “e” or an “i” it will have the “ch” sound. The official name of a cello is actually “violoncello” and it is normally abbreviated to “cello”. Violoncello means “little violone”. A violone was a slightly larger instrument than the double bass (see information on the violin family in the art lessons). It is a very uncommon instrument today.

Mystery

There is a little mystery in the story. Does your child know what it is? Has he/she

stopped to think about Mr. O's name? What is his real name? Is his name an abbreviation of his full last name (like Mr. O'Malley)? Why does the author not give his full name? Is it because the children don't know him well enough and don't know his full last name? Or is his name too hard to pronounce so the children have shortened it? Or is he such a famous musician that he doesn't need to go by his full name? In not giving his full last name does the author create a certain mystery surrounding his character? Discuss these ideas with your student.

Art

Cello and the Violin Family

Cello is the shortened form of the Italian word "violoncello" (See language arts lesson on Word Origins). It is a bowed string instrument. The person who plays a cello is called a cellist. It is often heard as a solo instrument in chamber music and in an orchestra. Some of the most famous pieces for the cello include Bach's six unaccompanied suites. If you can find these it might be nice for your student to listen to some of them.

The cello is a part of the modern violin family. The family consists of the violin, viola, cello, and the double bass. The violin has the highest "voice" in the family and is like the soprano of the group. The viola is the alto and larger than the violin. The cello is the tenor. The double bass is the bass "voice". As each voice gets lower, each instrument gets bigger with the violin being the smallest of the family and the bass, the largest. To play the violin and viola the musician must put the instrument under his/her chin. With the cello, the musician must sit with the instrument between the knees like Mr. O does in the story, but the bass is so large that the musician must stand to play it. All four instruments are played with a bow, but they can be plucked also.

Harmonica

The harmonica is a free reed wind instrument. Notes are made by blowing air or drawing air out of the harmonica. The longer reeds make the deep sounds, whereas the short reeds make the high-pitched sounds. Although the origins of the instrument are a mystery, they did first seem to show up in Germany. It was first introduced in the United States in 1862. The harmonica is used in blues, American folk music, jazz and country music. It has many nicknames (especially in blues music) and can be called a blues harp, mouth organ or blues mouth organ. Get a

harmonica for your child and see if he can play a tune! He/she may also want to experiment with the low and high notes on it.

Bach

The music of Bach is mentioned in the story. Johann Sebastian Bach was born in Germany on March 21, 1685. He came from a family of musicians. Over 300 years of Bachs all worked as musicians! During his lifetime, Bach had three major jobs: he worked for a duke, he worked for a prince, and he became the director of music at the St. Thomas Church and School in Leipzig, Germany. His music did not make him famous until 100 years after his death. Although Bach may be famous for his music, there is something else that made him famous during his lifetime: his twenty children! Five of the boys were named Johann and two of the girls were named Johanna! A few of his children grew up to be composers themselves. Bach died on July 28, 1750. Probably the best way to experience Bach is to listen to his music. Pick up some of his music at the library for your student to listen to. Does he/she recognize some of the songs?

Music through Pictures

Have your child look at the various pictures in the book. How is music represented in the book through the pictures? Have your student notice that when the music is represented through pictures they are dream-like scenes that float up into the air. These scenes tend to be happy ones. Have your child recreate a picture representing what music makes him/her think about or feel.

Details (Jacks and Bombs)

On the page that starts with "It is four o'clock in the afternoon, a dull fall Wednesday." Notice the ball and jacks picture under the text. This picture is similar to the first picture at the start of the story where the little girl sees the flash of mortars out her window. The illustrator has captured that same visual with the balls and jacks. Why has he does this? Notice that in the story the girl and her friend are playing jacks and then they hear a rocket hit. The jacks picture represents not only what the girls were playing, but also the war outside the building. You could have your child try to recreate this picture. Your child could complete the picture in all watercolors like the illustrator did, or for a fun variation, have your child use oil pastels to recreate the ball and jacks. Have him/her also use a bright yellow to surround the ball going out like rays. Then have your child take a dark red watercolor and paint over the entire picture. The oil from the pastels will

repel the watercolor and the watercolor will only remain on the paper that doesn't have oil pastels.

Science

Shooting Stars and Meteors

The main character of the story pretends that the tracer fire and the mortars are shooting stars and meteors. What are shooting stars and meteors? Does your student know that they are one in the same? A meteoroid is a small particle (the size of a grain of sand to boulder-sized) in the Solar system. They normally are pieces of asteroids or comets. A meteoroid becomes a meteor when it enters the Earth's atmosphere. Shooting stars are another name for meteors. There is another word, meteorite. Meteorites are portions of meteors that survive through the Earth's atmosphere and land on the surface of the Earth without being destroyed. Why do meteors or shooting stars glow? Because they enter the Earth's atmosphere at such a great speed, the meteors will begin to glow white from the heat that is produced. We see the streak of light as they are burning up. On a typical night shooting stars can be seen every 15 minutes or so, but there are times when meteor showers occur. Meteor showers happen when shooting stars can be seen every few minutes. If you are doing the lessons for The Cello of Mr. O during late July to mid-August, you might want to see if you can see the Perseid meteor shower. It normally peaks on August 12th. The meteor shower is normally visible in the Northern Hemisphere. Once you have described the differences for your student have them write in their own words the differences between a meteoroid, meteor and meteorite.

Different Kinds of Wood

There are several types of wood that are mentioned that helped to make Mr. O's cello. The front and the back were made out of German fiddle back maple. Fiddle back maple is also called flame maple or tiger strip maple. This type of maple tree has wood that looks like waves in it because of the way the wood fibers form. Fiddle back maple is used to make musical instruments and furniture. The neck of the cello is made from mahogany from Honduras. Mahogany is a dark-colored wood with a reddish tinge. Mahogany is used in making boats, furniture and musical instruments such as drums and guitars. It is part of the national seal of Belize (which was formerly "British Honduras"). The fingerboard (the dark part of the cello; the strings run over the fingerboard) is made of ebony. Ebony is native to Sri Lanka (and parts of India). It has a very dark (black) wood. It used to be that

ebony was used for the black keys of piano and in carved chess pieces. Ebony is still used for some musical instruments.

This might be a good time to talk about the different parts of a tree trunk. With each year of growth another ring is added to a tree's trunk. These rings can be seen in tree stumps. See if you can find a tree stump in your neighborhood that your student can look at. Each ring has two separate areas called spring wood and summer wood. Spring wood forms early in the growing season and is softer than summer wood. Summer wood grows later on in the season and is harder. The spring wood is lighter and the summer wood is darker. Can your student see the spring and summer woods in a tree stump? After a number of years, the rings can be divided into two groups. The area nearest the middle where the rings are the oldest is called heartwood. Ebony is heartwood. The outer area is called sapwood because this area can still carry sap. Heartwood looks like a dark core in the middle of the tree trunk. Sapwood is lighter in color. Can your student find the heartwood and sapwood in a tree stump?

Ivory

The tip of Mr. O's bow is made of ivory that came from ivory. Ivory comes from the teeth and/or tusks (which are actually long teeth) of such animals as the elephant, walrus, hippo, mammoth and narwhal. Prior to the use of plastics, ivory was used for the white keys of a piano, billiard balls, bagpipes, and buttons. It is also used in carvings. Nowadays, because of the reduced populations of the animals that provide ivory, its sale and use are prohibited in many countries. An older student may want to further study ivory and the animals that produce it. If your student is interested have him research the above mentioned animals to see if they are threatened or endangered. You may want to have your student draw some of the animals that we get ivory from. If you have the Draw Write Now series here are the book and page numbers for instructions on drawing those animals that produce ivory.

Draw Write Now Book 8- page 12-hippo page 18-elephant

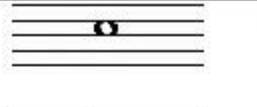




Draw Write Now Book 4- page 32-walrus

Draw Write Now Book 7 page 10-Asian elephant

Math

Music Note Values

Does your student know the value of each musical note? This would be a good time to go over the value of each one. Below is a list of the most common notes and their beat value. For example, for a whole note, since it is four beats, you would count 1-2-3-4, but a half note would only be 1-2. The amount of time you need to count out the numbers is how long a note is held when playing music. Have your student practice counting some of the notes.

	Whole note	4 beats
	Half note	2 beats
	Quarter note	1 beat
	Eighth note	$\frac{1}{2}$ beat
	Sixteenth note	$\frac{1}{4}$ beat

Using the above information, you can then ask your student some math questions. Here are some examples:

- *If you have 5 wholes notes, how many beats is that?
- *If you have 10 half notes, how many beats do you have?
- *Eight sixteenth notes equal how many beats?

Military time

The relief truck comes at four o'clock each Wednesday during the war. Does your student know what 4:00 pm is in military time? It is used so that there is no confusion between 2:00 am and 2:00 pm for example. Here is a chart for regular time and military time. When saying the times, you express them like this: 1300 is

expressed as “Thirteen hundred hours” or 2000 is expressed as “Twenty hundred hours.” For your child to convert from regular time to military time from 1pm on he/she must add 12 to the number (1pm + 12 = 1300 hours). To convert from military time to regular you need to subtract 12 (You have 1700 hours. Take 17-12=5. So it is 5pm.). Have your student practice converting times both ways. For example, if it is 1800 hours what time is it? If it is 11pm, what time is it in military time?

Regular Time	Military Time	Regular Time	Military Time
Midnight	0000	Noon	1200
1:00 a.m.	0100	1:00 p.m.	1300
2:00 a.m.	0200	2:00 p.m.	1400
3:00 a.m.	0300	3:00 p.m.	1500
4:00 a.m.	0400	4:00 p.m.	1600
5:00 a.m.	0500	5:00 p.m.	1700
6:00 a.m.	0600	6:00 p.m.	1800
7:00 a.m.	0700	7:00 p.m.	1900
8:00 a.m.	0800	8:00 p.m.	2000
9:00 a.m.	0900	9:00 p.m.	2100
10:00 a.m.	1000	10:00 p.m.	2200

11:00 a.m.	1100	11:00 p.m.	2300
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Bible Lessons

There are many verses and stories that relate to fear in the Bible. One of them is when Peter and Jesus walk on the water (Matthew 14:25-33). As long as Peter kept his eyes on Jesus he could walk on the water, but when he turned his gaze to the wind and the waves he began to sink. We must keep our eyes on Jesus to combat our fear. Other verses on fear are Joshua 1:9, Isaiah 41:10, Psalm 91, Psalms 56:3. You could also talk about the fear of the Lord and what that means. Fearing God means that we love and respect Him. Here is a verse on the fear of the Lord, Proverbs 19:23.

Another topic would be that of anger. Anger is not necessarily a bad emotion like in the case of Jesus getting angry at the people for selling in the temple. Anger that is not dealt with becomes dangerous and can make a person bitter. To help your child remember this tell him/her that “anger” is one letter away from “danger”! Here are some verses that relate to anger: Ephesians 4:26, Exodus 34:6, Proverbs 15:1, Proverbs 22:24-25, I Corinthians 13:5, James 1:19

Just for Fun

Meteor Crisps

Make these fun cookies and review the concepts of meteoroids, meteors and meteorites!

½ cup butter

10 ½ oz. Mini marshmallows (1 bag)

2 chocolate covered caramel and nougat candy bars, 2.15 oz. each, chopped

6 cups Crisp rice cereal

Colored sugars, decorator candies or sprinkles

In a 4-quart sauce pan, melt butter over medium low heat. Stir in marshmallows until melted. Remove from heat, stir in candy bars. Stir in cereal. With buttered hands, shape mixture into 1 inch balls. Roll in sprinkles. Place on waxed paper. Store in airtight container.

Library List

Sebastian: A Book about Bach by Jeanette Winter

Mr. Bach Comes to Call CD by Karen Lavut

Call Me Ahnighito by Pam Conrad

Meeting Trees by Scott Russell Sanders

Crinkleroot's Guide to Knowing the Trees by Jim Arnosky

Draw Write Now books 4,7,8

World Atlas

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