

SOFIA VALDEZ, FUTURE PREZ

by Andrea Beaty illustrated by David Roberts



ABOUT THE BOOK

Every morning, Abuelo walks Sofia to school . . . until one day when he hurts his ankle at a local landfill and can no longer do so. Sofia (aka Sofi) misses her Abuelo and wonders what she can do about the dangerous Mount Trashmore. Then she gets an idea—the town can turn the slimy mess into a park! She brainstorms and plans and finally works up the courage to go to City Hall—only to be told by a clerk that Sofia can't build a park because she's just a kid! Sofia is down but not out, and she sets out to prove what one kid can do.

About the Author and Illustrator

Andrea Beaty is the bestselling author of *Ada Twist, Scientist*; *Rosie Revere, Engineer*; and *Iggy Peck, Architect*; among many other books. She has a degree in biology and computer science and spent many years in the computer industry. She now writes children's books in her home outside Chicago.

David Roberts has illustrated many children's books, including the bestselling Questioners series. He lives in London, where, when not drawing, he likes to make hats.

VOCABULARY

These vocabulary words can be found throughout the book. Use these words as a starting point for a vocabulary study with *Sofia Valdez, Future Prez*. Research shows that reading and discussing unfamiliar words within the context of reading is one of the most effective ways to build vocabulary.

bellowing

heartsick

kiboshed

petition

surveys

landfill

City Hall

government

clerk

taxes

earsplitting

major

elders

hearings

citizen

Vocabulary Expansion: Spanish Words and Phrases

Although Sofia lives in the United States, she is part of a Spanish-speaking family. Have students use context clues to decipher the meaning of the following:

Abuelo

te amo

mi vida

sí, se puede

ACTIVITIES

Mount Trashmore

The book dedicates five pages to detailed illustrations of the landfill. Some items from the illustrations have been listed below to begin a discussion on how these might have been recycled, reused, composted, or repurposed in some other way. Have your students find additional discarded trash in Mount Trashmore to continue the activity.

TRASH ITEM	COMPOST	REUSE OR RECYCLE?	OTHER IDEA
Clock			
Plastic bottles			
Electric drill			
Spray-paint can			
Plastic toy car			
Cardboard tubes			

Dreamers, Doers, and Real-Life Go-Getters

Invite students to learn about activists who worked for change in their communities. Begin by sharing information about journalist and activist Ida B. Wells whose statue greets Sofia when she approaches City Hall. Then ask students if they know of any other people working for change in the world.

Here are some women activists from the United States you might bring up with your students:

- Rosa Parks
- Fannie Lou Hamer
- Dolores Huerta
- Elizabeth Cady Stanton
- Alice Paul

Encourage students to visit the National Women's History Museum's website (womenshistory.org) to learn about famous women activists of different races and ethnicities. The Museum's poster project with brief biographies is one specific resource that students can use to begin their research: [http://womenshistory.org/sites/default/files/document/2018-04/American Activists 24X36 4-6-18.pdf](http://womenshistory.org/sites/default/files/document/2018-04/American%20Activists%2024X36%204-6-18.pdf).

Students can then expand their inquiries to young people working to address contemporary world issues. Many of these activists began in their own communities, just like Sofia, and then moved on to larger, more global platforms.

Here are some well-known child and teen activists from around the world:

- Greta Thunberg and Alexandria Villaseñor (climate action)
- Malala Yousafzai (female education)
- Emma Gonzalez (gun safety/control)
- Autumn Peltier (safe/clean drinking water)
- Sophie Cruz (immigrant rights)

Amplifier (amplifier.org) has terrific resources on grassroots movements spearheaded by young people that you could incorporate into this lesson.

Start a Petition!

As Sofia's story shows, petitions are important because they articulate what a community wants or needs and demonstrate when there is wide community support for an issue. Have students practice petition writing for issues at your school.

Explain to students that there are three types of petitions:

- To suggest or propose something (example: students could propose to have pizza served at lunch every Friday)
- To stop something from happening (example: if students disagree that a school rule or policy is unfair, they can try to prevent it from continuing or being implemented)
- To recall an official from office (example: In Roald Dahl's book *Matilda*, Miss Trunchbull bullies students. Matilda could start a petition to have Miss Trunchbull lose her position as headmistress.)

Then lead a brainstorming session with students on school issues they could address with a petition. Follow this up with a writing exercise where students draft a petition that clearly states the issue being addressed and what they'd like to see changed. Have students read their petitions to the class and then solicit signatures from classmates who agree with them.

Protest Signs and Symbols

Match the protest sign or symbol from the book to the real protest sign it references:

BLUE RIVER CREEK

REAL LIFE



- An hourglass within a circle is meant to remind us that time is running out for many species on Earth who are under threat of extinction.
- From an American World War II poster depicting Rosie the Riveter, a female factory worker, this slogan used an inspirational phrase to let women know that they could do factory work and hold down jobs traditionally given to men.
- Used widely in the 1960s, this symbol was designed to promote peace and nuclear disarmament.
- At birth, one color is typically assigned to girl babies, while another color is traditionally meant for boy babies. Can you think of what those colors are? This flag shows those colors in horizontal stripes at the top and bottom of the flag. The white stripe in the middle represents those who identify as transgender. A transgender person identifies with a different gender than the one they were assigned at birth.
- Showing the colors of the rainbow, this flag represents the diversity of the LGBTQ+ community. While the flag originated in San Francisco, it is now seen all over the world and known commonly as the LGBTQ+ pride flag.
- This was the motto of the United Farm Workers of America movement. Many farmworkers were Mexican Americans who spoke Spanish, and the phrase means "Yes, it can be done" in English.
- In the book, Citizens Park provides a space to give bees a chance, but this sign references an anti-war song written in the 1960s by John Lennon that wanted to give peace a chance.
- In Nazi Germany, this symbol was used to identify homosexual men who were placed in concentration camps because of their sexuality. Today, this pink triangle has been reclaimed by the LGBTQ+ community as an expression of pride.

Asset/Liability Mapping

Using Google Maps, have students find which neighborhoods in your city have:

- landfills
- power plants
- parks
- museums
- railroad lines
- public mailboxes
- grocery stores

Ask students to think about why certain neighborhoods might have parks when others have landfills. Then have them consider the following questions:

- What would you do if you lived next to a landfill or power plant?
- What would you do if you had no parks or green spaces in your neighborhood?
- What would you do if you had to travel to another neighborhood or part of town to buy groceries?
- What would you do if the city announced plans to build a highway through the center of your neighborhood?

Show students how to find their city council representative on the website of the municipal government for your city or town.

Have students draft a mock letter to their city council representative about a chosen issue that they discovered through this activity.

Then have students create protests signs for a rally that will be held around the chosen issue.

QUESTIONS FOR WHOLE CLASS DISCUSSION

Compare Sofia's neighborhood/community to your own. Do you know your neighbors? Do people in your neighborhood help others walk their dogs, mow their lawns, or pick up trash? Do you have a role in your neighborhood or community? If so, what is it?

Define the characteristics that make Sofia a great community leader. Compare and contrast Sofia to famous community leaders discussed in this packet. How is she the same or different?

Why do you think Sofia was sent to the many strange departments (Department of Fun, Department of Duck Ponds and Cool Things to Do, Department of Cheese, etc.) before being able to talk to someone about Mount Trashmore? What departments actually exist in your local mayor's office? Identify at least three and explain what each is in charge of.

ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES

Changemakers loc.gov/topics/changemakers

Historical Thinking Matters historicalthinkingmatters.org

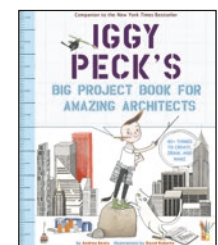
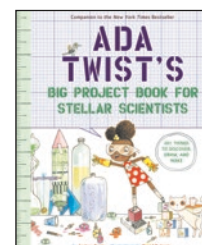
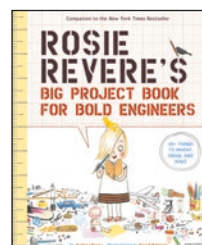
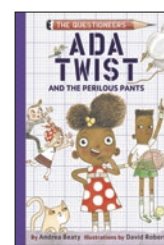
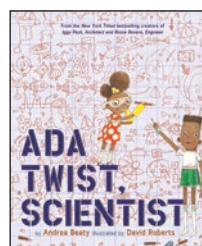
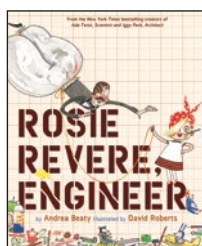
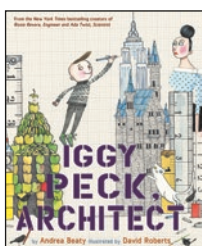
iCivics icivics.org

Smithsonian Education historyexplorer.si.edu/resource/reading-freedom-menu

Teaching Tolerance tolerance.org

Teaching for Change teachingforchange.org

ALSO AVAILABLE



This educator's guide was written by Cynthia M. Garza, middle-school humanities teacher and Latin American studies scholar.