

Author: Andrea Beaty

Illustrator: Dave Roberts

Abrams Books, 2019.

Topics: Student voices, Community building, who we are as citizens, Rights and responsibilities, petitioning, civics action, navigating local government as a citizen.

Genres: Community stories, picture books, intergenerational stories, and Child leader fiction, community service fictional narratives, rhyming narratives.

This beautifully David Roberts illustrated book, highlights the ways in which young elementary children can make a felt and seen difference in their community right now. The work focuses on young Sofia Valdez, a caring second grade who with her loving grandfather sets out to help others. It demonstrates how by delivering groceries, watering local plants, dropping by those who are ill and need to stay at home, Sofia a second grader already is contributing positive citizen. The crux of the story focuses on improving a city park by extensive cleanup of its trash and implementation of a park makeover. Although the tone is light, highlighted by delightful alternating-easy to read along and with text, the focus of this second grader activist is authentically modeled. Sofia with the support of her adult family and community members follows al the correct steps for engages with community citizens and tackling city hall government departments. She takes notes and communicates her findings, which are backed up by a petition. In effecting the improvement, Sofia gets help from active doing adults and a partnering set of local community leaders. It is key to remember that the title “Sofia Valdez, Future Prez” is an indicator that today’s activism as a child in elementary school forecasts future political elected role leadership. What is truly valuable in this book, which is a national best seller, is not the charm of its story or illustrations, but its powerful message that children have the ability to be contributing activist citizens while in lower elementary grades.

**BEFORE THE READ ALOUD:**

1. **While you are certainly learning how to do positive actions in school, in your family and in your neighborhood, are you as a child right now, really able to do actions or support good community projects? If so, can you think of any ways you helped adult, businesses or community events, even though you are still an elementary student? Do not provide answers for the students, but step back and let them brainstorm the answers. Direct them if necessary to ways they help persons in their neighborhood with groceries, household cleaning, bending down to pick up items, trash clean up and beyond. Some students may volunteer past or holiday experiences such as wrapping gifts for needy children or singing as part of a chorus at events for hospitalized students or senior homes. Encourage them to provide through words and hand drawn art as extensive a list of possible ways they have already made a difference in their family or community by doing or helping adults with an important needed task.**
2. **Challenge the children with the title of this book. Focus them on “Future Prez.”**

**Before we read this book, ask the students to share via art illustrations or writing or just talk, what they feel the President does. Challenge them, given these concepts of the actual day to day, of what the President does to suggest how one could decide if a child in their class could grow up to be the Future Prez. Do not comment or correct the student ideas, since this will be revisited as well as the first challenge after the students finish the story.**

**During the Read Aloud:**

1. As we read this story about Sofia together, focus on just her as a second grader. What actual tasks and services does Sofia perform and participate in as part of this story? Potential responses: watering plants, helping elderly, raking leaves, putting up signs, noting down community complaints, mapping the park, going to City Hall to meet with officials, made a plan to improve the park, drew up a petition, got signatures, sparked her teacher Ms. Greer and some in class Two to make signs.
2. What challenges does Sofia face in getting her dream of improving Blue River Creek Park realized? How does she face down these challenges? Would you say that Sofia succeeds on her own or is she helped by supporting adults? Back up your answer with details from the story.

**After the Read Aloud-Take Action Project:**

**Options:**

1. **Let us now revisit our ideas about whether a student your age can right now make a difference as a citizen. While this story about Sofia is fictional, given the tasks and activities she performs , what tasks are you already doing in your life that prove you are an active citizen now? List them. What doable-not a vast sum of money needed and doable by you, your class and teacher plus adults in a fairly short time, task or service could you perform at school, in your residence/neighborhood or in your community? Students should be able to come up with tasks or services that are doable with the help of others. In my neighborhood these could include with an adult in tow: participating in a park cleanup, packaging and distributing backpacks for school to peers, being part of a student community leader after school group, performing at a community center for seniors, collecting cans for a food drive, developing school signs and posters to advocate for more school budget funds, helping local neighbors who use canes or walkers with grocery shopping carrying and bending and more. Make a plan or diagram of how, when and where and how much time you can devote to being a citizen now. Share it and within two weeks, report back in words or photos showing your Citizen Now Community Service.**
2. **Sofia is backed by a caring teacher Miss Lila Greer and her friends in grade two. Imagine that Sofia visited your class and your teacher. Write a story or create a dialogue play script in which you and your classmates talk with Sofia. What questions would you ask her about her park campaign? What might she ask you and your class? What would she suggest you do as a class to improve your school or community? What would she really enjoy about your school? What might she dislike if anything? Which subjects would she really participate in actively? Create a story, a play or a graphic novel about Sofia’s visit to your school.**

Additional teacher resources:

1. Teachers particularly those who teach grades 2-5 may want to tap into the ready use activity materials and civic centered activism of Sofia Valdez’s Big Project Book for Awesome Activists (2020, Abrams). This oversized volume is part of Beaty series for grades 2-5and beyond which offers a treasure trove of good to go, materials already accessible in the classroom resources. The civics projects in this volume are easy hands on and reference accurately the governmental process. They are especially useful as an accessible road map for contacting elected officials, drawing new parks, developing campaign buttons and envisioning community changes one-step at a time.
2. Teachers of grades 2-5 will also want to check out the highly accessible chapter book series, which includes Sofia Valdez and the Vanishing Vote that focuses on a class election, topically infusing concepts of ballot counting.
3. BEATTY DOWLOADABLES-Teachers do not even have to buy or to borrow either the Sofia Valdez Awesome Activist Project Book or the Sofia Valdez Vanishing Vote Book, Beaty has a wonderfully teacher friendly and exceedingly resource rich website which includes downloads of activities that fit into general social studies and language arts curricula on many levels. These are downloadable :

<https://questioneers.com/downloadables>

The general site, which includes an activity generator that helps educators narrow down options:

<https://questioneers.com/for-educators/>

1. Andrea Beaty reads her story aloud.

Kids can imagine what Andrea looks like or sounds like and then can hear her actual voice and see her reading the story on demand. The recording was done for Barnes and Noble.

<https://youtu.be/dHSlyb6706o?si=LBgxeO3Sh3n8goMq>