

A CURRICULUM GUIDE TO HEY, WALL A STORY OF ART AND COMMUNITY

By Susan Verde, Illustrated by John Parra

Hey, Wall: A Story of Art and Community
HC: 9781481453134 · EB: 9781481453141
Ages 4–8; Grades P–3 · Paula Wiseman Books



BACKGROUND/SUMMARY

A young boy decides to do something about the old, empty wall that covers an entire city block in his neighborhood. He joins family, friends, and neighbors to transform the wall, filling it with memories of their community to tell the stories of their lives.

Once they paint their mural, the artwork transforms the once neglected block to one of bustling activity. A street fair emerges with vendors, spectators, songs, dancing, and bike riding. There is joy and a feeling of community.

Author Susan Verde's poetic writing and John Parra's detailed illustrations show how a community working together uses art to make a dramatic change for all residents.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/ACTIVITIES

Key Ideas and Details

The discussion questions and activities below draw on Common Core State Standards for reading literature (RL) that prompt children to ask and answer questions about key details in a text (RL.K.1-RL.3.1), identify the main topic and key details that support it (RL.K.2-RL.3.2), and describe the relationship between a series of events, concepts, or ideas (RL.K.3-RL.3.3).

1. What was the main problem with the wall? How did it influence people's behavior?
2. How did the community work to change the wall? Tell what each of these people did:
 - The boy
 - James and Danny
 - Grandma Addy
 - Friends, family, and neighbors
3. Compare the wall *before* and *after* it was painted. (See reproducible activity sheet at the end of this guide.)
4. Imagine that you could interview the people in this story. What questions would you ask them? Prepare questions for the boy who is telling the story, James, Danny, Grandma Addy, family, friends, and neighbors. Use some of the following words to begin your questions:
 - What?
 - How?
 - Why?
 - Who?
 - Where?
 - When?

With a partner, take turns asking and then answering these questions as if you were the person involved.

5. At the end of the story, the author writes this about the wall:

“Now you tell the *real* story of us. And together *we* are somethin’ to see!”

Discuss what this means. What is the real story of the people in the community? Why didn’t the original wall accurately represent the community?

6. The title of the book is *Hey, Wall: A Story of Art and Community*. Why is this a good title for this story?

7. What could you and your classmates do to improve your classroom or school community? How could you use art to help you do this?

CRAFT AND STRUCTURE

To learn about craft and structure, the CCSS asks us to help students learn and understand vocabulary words and phrases (RL.K.4-RL.3-4), think about the features of the text (RL.K.5-RL.3.5), and assess the author’s point of view (RL.K.6-RL.3.6). The questions and activities below emphasize these understandings.

8. **Looking at Well-Crafted Language.** The author uses several techniques to make the language she uses memorable and appealing. Samples of two techniques—repetition and rhyme—are given below. Read each example aloud and then discuss how the language makes you think and feel about the wall. Then find additional examples of each technique in the story.

- **Repetition**, or the recurring use of words and phrases, provides emphasis and rhythm.

Here is how the author emphasizes the wall’s size:

You are **BIG**.

A **city block BIG**.

My **city block**.

Later in the book, the author uses the same words to emphasize joyful community activities:

Can you hear our **music**?

We are salsa dancing.

We are hip-hopping.

We are dizzy from spinning.

Additional examples: _____

- **Rhyme**, or the use of words that end in the same sound, makes the language pleasant to hear.

Here is how the author uses rhyme:

You are **cold**,

old,

empty.

Additional examples: _____

Try using repetition and rhyme in your writing.

9. **Looking at the Author’s Note.** In “A Note from the Author,” Susan Verde tells us more about street art. What does she tell us about the following topics:

- How she and her classmates felt when they created a mural on their playground wall
- The difference between graffiti and street art
- Festivals that celebrate street art and wall mural painting

10. **Looking at the Illustrator’s Note.** In “A Note from the Illustrator,” John Parra tells us how he learned about street art murals. What does he tell us about the following topics:

- His earliest memories of seeing outdoor murals
- What he learned about outdoor murals as a young adult
- What he learned about murals as a professional artist

11. Illustrator John Parra wrote:

“You do not have to visit a museum or an art gallery. Art murals are there for you to enjoy from the street. They become part of our lives and conversations.”

Do you agree with this statement? Explain why. Have you seen artwork both in museums and on the street? If so, what were the similarities and differences between those experiences?

INTEGRATION OF INFORMATION

The Common Core State Standards ask students to use both the illustrations and details to describe key ideas and to show how images contribute to and clarify a text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur). (RI 1.7-RI 4.7).

12. **Learning from Words and Illustrations.** The words and illustrations work together to explain key ideas and the details that support them. How is this done? (See reproducible activity sheets at the end of this guide.)

WRITING

CCSS emphasizes writing informative and explanatory text in the early grades. The writing activities below provide experience writing to give an opinion (W.K.1-W.3.1), to inform (W.K.2-W.3.2), and to explain a sequence of events (W.K.3-W.3.3).

13. Imagine that you are the boy who described himself as a “wall changer.” Explain the steps that you and your family, friends, and neighbors took to change the wall. What did you do first, second, and third? How did your project end?

14. *Hey, Wall* is written as a poem of address. Instead of telling us about the wall, the boy speaks directly to it. He calls it *you*.



At the beginning of the story, he says,
**“You are cold,
old,
empty.”**

At the end of the story, he says,
**“Look at you now.
You are beautiful!”**

Select an object you can speak to, and write your own poem of address. Here are suggestions for objects you might write to:

- school bus
- backpack
- computer
- sun
- clouds
- animal (dog, cat, bird, pig, elephant, horse, penguin)
- baseball
- hockey puck
- basketball
- pizza
- spaghetti
- ice cream
- winter coat
- snow
- rain
- sunshine

When writing your own poem, tell the object your thoughts. Ask questions. Make suggestions. Give your opinions.

15. Make your own art and school community project. Work with your teacher, classmates, and interested adults. Follow these steps:

- (1) Select a location in or around the school.
- (2) Decide what the project will look like. Make a sketch of the artwork and gather the materials you'll need.
- (3) Create the art.
- (4) Share your artwork with others in your school.
- (5) Write about your art and community project. Share your writing with others in your community.

16. The boy in *Hey, Wall* describes himself this way:

**“I am a writer, a creator,
a game changer,
a wall changer.”**

Are these important qualities to have and share with your community? Explain your thoughts. Name three words or phrases you would use to describe yourself.

EXTENDING THE EXPERIENCE

1. Read *Maybe Something Beautiful: How Art Transformed a Neighborhood*. This is another picture book about a community art project. You can also watch a video of this book being read aloud at:

[YouTube.com/watch?v=8Xm8jYxGncM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Xm8jYxGncM)

2. Read other books written by Susan Verde:

- *I Am Peace: A Book of Mindfulness*
- *Rock 'n' Roll Soul*
- *I Am Yoga*
- *You and Me*
- *The Water Princess*
- *The Museum*
- *My Kicks: A Sneaker Story!*

3. Read other books illustrated by John Parra:

- *Frida Kahlo and Her Animalitos*
- *Round Is a Tortilla*
- *Waiting for the Biblioburro*
- *Gracias/Thanks*
- *Marvelous Cornelius: Hurricane Katrina and the Spirit of New Orleans*
- *My Name Is Gabriela/Me Llamo Gabriela*
- *P Is for Piñata: A Mexican Alphabet*



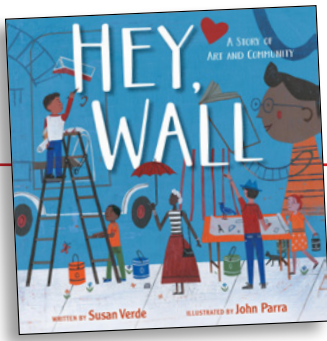
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HEY, WALL: A STORY OF ART AND COMMUNITY

Before and After

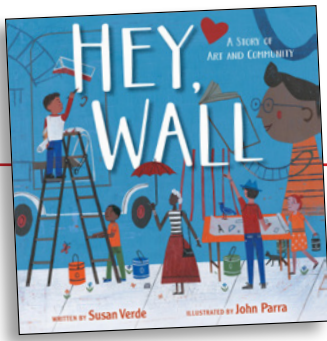
Compare the wall *before* and *after* it was painted.



What did the wall look like before it was painted? What words would you use to describe this wall?



What did the wall look like after it was painted? What changes do you notice? What people and activities are shown? What is happening in the street? What words would you use to describe this wall?



HEY, WALL: A STORY OF ART AND COMMUNITY

Learning from Words and Illustrations

Words and illustrations work together to explain key ideas and the details that support them. Look at the images and then answer the questions below.



KEY IDEA: The wall is big, but old and empty.

DETAILS:

1. What details are provided only by the words? _____

2. What details are provided only by the illustrations? _____

3. How do the words and illustrations work together? _____



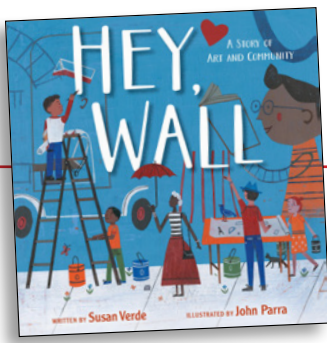
KEY IDEA: Inside with family, friends, and neighbors there is love.

DETAILS:

1. What details about families, friends and neighbors are provided only by the words? _____

2. What details about families, friends, and neighbors are provided only by the illustrations? _____

3. How do the words and illustrations work together? _____



HEY, WALL: A STORY OF ART AND COMMUNITY

Learning from Words and Illustrations



KEY IDEA: Create art by painting the wall.

DETAILS:

1. What details about creating the art are provided only by the words? _____

2. What details about creating the art are provided only by the illustrations? _____

3. How do the words and illustrations work together? _____



KEY IDEA: The finished wall reveals beautiful artwork and a thriving community.

DETAILS:

1. What details about the art and community are provided only by the words? _____

2. What details about the art and community are provided only by the illustrations? _____

3. How do the words and illustrations work together? _____
