

## TEACHER'S NOTES

# PIANO PIANO



by Davide Cali, illustrated by Eric Heliot

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## 1. About the book

Every child has to do something they don't want to do at some stage. In David Cali and Eric Heliot's internationally acclaimed picture book about three generations and an upright, young Marcolino doesn't want to practice the piano.

'When I was your age I played for hours,' Mum insists.

Marcolino reluctantly obeys his mum, until his grandfather reveals that Mum's attitude to the piano when she was a little girl wasn't so different from Marcolino's.

Realising her error, Mum lets Marcolino choose any instrument he likes from the music shop. His choice? An enormous and delightfully loud tuba!

An entertaining and quirky work by two of Europe's most popular creators of books for younger children, *Piano Piano* is about finding your passion, no matter if that passion strays from the norm.

Warmly reflecting on the connections between child, parent and grandparent, *Piano Piano* also has something to say about letting children pursue their own interests.

*Piano Piano* received Special Mention at the prestigious Bologna Ragazzi Awards (for children's book illustration) and was acclaimed an Outstanding International Book by the United States Board on Books for Young People (USBBY).

## 2. Notes for teachers and parents

by Alison Lough, Chelsea Heights Primary School

Here is another quality book by Davide Cali. It is my pleasure to be able to present this set of teaching notes to assist you in maximising the use of this book in a primary classroom setting.

The activities listed cover a wide variety of English curriculum requirements. Some of the activities are also suitable for linking with mathematics, art or for promoting discussion preceding a music class.

Activities for use with this book:

### PRE-READING ACTIVITIES:

1. Hold the book up and brainstorm a list of all the details on the cover.
2. Who is the Author? Who is the Illustrator? What job do each of these people do when a book is created? Who else is involved in creating a book? Have you heard of a Publisher? What do they do? Show students the publishing logo and copyright symbol – discuss.
3. Talk about the illustration and pose questions for discussion. Eg 'Why does the cat have stripes? How is this related to the title?'
4. Does the picture make you think it's a fiction or a non-fiction book? What's the difference?
5. Look at the back cover. Is there a blurb or other information? What does it tell us?
6. Ask students to predict what the story might be about before even turning to the first page.
7. Flip through the book (without reading) and focus on the layout and pictures. What are some of the things you notice? Can you tell the story from studying the pictures?
8. Do you like this style of illustration? Which features stand out? Why do you think the illustrator has chosen this style for his drawings? What do you/don't you like about them?

### DURING READING:

#### Page by page

The following are a list of activities you could use in a variety of ways. You could select a different activ-

ity or two to do each day, ask the questions incidentally as you read the book, set up different activities in small group rotations, or put a list of activities/questions up for students to choose their own.

#### Page One



- Ask students what they are usually doing at 3pm each day?
- Ask students if there are specific things they do at the same time each day.
- Do they know what is meant by 'practising scales'?

#### Page Two

- Ask students what they know about a piano. Can they name the different parts? Have they ever played a piano?
- What do the words cling, clang and clong mean? Are they real words? What do they represent?
- Choose a different instrument and list some words (or make some up) that could represent the sounds the instrument makes. Students could search for a picture of their instrument on the computer and add their words to it. Print them out for a display.

#### Page Three



- Ask students why they think Marcolino only practises for 13 minutes? Is he that good that it's all he needs? Does he lack concentration? Come up with as many reasons you can.
- Ask students to discuss the sorts of things they have to practice to become better (e.g. sport skills, reading, drawing, instruments, times tables, singing etc)
- Like Marcolino and his television, is there some-

thing particular that distracts your students from practising what they are supposed to?

- In small groups, ask students to list their favourite distractions (ie things they would rather do than their homework or other requirements they consider to be less fun). Groups could present their ideas to the class. As a whole the class could have a vote as to which activity is the most popular. This could also be presented as a graph.
- What is Marcolino watching on television? Does he seem to like it? How can you tell?
- What kind of television shows do you like? Do you think you'd enjoy watching television with Marcolino?
- Do you have a pet that watches television with you? Why do cats like sitting on your lap while you watch television? Are they watching too, or is there some other reason for them to be there?

#### Page Four

- Discuss the body language on this page. What does the way Mum is standing over Marcolino tell you? What do Marcolino's slouched shoulders and loose arms tell you about his reaction? How do you think Mum would be speaking? Would she be shouting, talking sternly, calmly, fast speech, slow speech? Are there any other clues on the page (e.g. the cat's reaction?)
- Choose students, or in pairs, have students act out the scene, using different types of voice and styles of speech.
- Ask students whether their parents are frequently telling them to get back to their chores or tasks, when they are doing something they enjoy. Why do parents do this? Why can't we just do what we want when we want? What's so important about having practice at things?
- Why do you think Marcolino's mum wants him to practise playing the piano so badly? Come up with as many reasons you can (eg maybe she paid a lot of money for the piano or perhaps she wants him to be a famous pianist etc)

#### Page Five



- The piano looks very big towering over Marcolino on this page. Do you think the illustrator has done this on purpose? What does it suggest?
- Look at the sheet music in the background of the page. Has anyone seen this type of written music before? What do the symbols mean? What do the lines represent?
- Look at the words in the music. What are words to music called? Discuss what song lyrics are. Talk about where they are written along the sheet and why (ie so the musicians know when to sing during the song). Show some examples of other sheet music. Use something simple that the students would know if it is available.
- Take a closer look at the lyrics on this page. What language is that? Why do you think it is not in English? Has anybody heard or seen anything in French before? (Some schools that provide French lessons as their LOTE may be able to delve more deeply into activities regarding the language).
- Predicting - ask students to predict what will happen next in the story.

#### Page Six

- Have students create a wall of words for the way Marcolino must be feeling or for his reaction at this point, e.g. angry, frustrated, temper tantrum, negative, sad, over it, over the top, at boiling point, steaming, sick and tired etc.
- Students could cut up strips of paper to write their words on about Marcolino's feelings towards the piano. Put all the strips together to look like piano keys and make a class display for the wall or window.
- Ask students how they react when they find something frustrating or difficult. Do they clench their fists and bang things or do they have some other way of dealing with frustration?

#### Page Seven



- Discuss the dialogue between Mum and Marcolino. What are the words mum uses to try and encourage Marcolino to keep practising? Imagine you had to encourage someone to keep doing something, what are some of the words or phrases you would use?

- Marcolino's mum says that she practised for hours when she was young. Which things do your parents, grandparents or other adults you know do, that would have required hours of practise to master? (If there is a parent who can play an instrument or has a special skill amongst the group, you could get them in to talk with the class about their level of commitment to learning it when they were young).
- Why didn't Marcolino's mum have enough time to play piano after Marcolino was born? What are some of the things in life that prevent people from doing other things? Think of a famous person (a sporting hero, musician, scientist etc) and research their history - how did they get where they are? What do and don't these people have in their lives? Did they have to give things up in order to achieve their dreams?
- Talk about what it means to be successful at something. Do you have to become famous in order for your skills to mean anything?
- Ask students to list all the skills/talents they have that they feel they are successful at. Ask them to identify which of these they could persevere with to improve.
- Discuss expectations. What are they? Who sets them? Do you think Marcolino's mum expects too much of him?

### Page Eight

- Predict what will happen in the end ... will Marcolino become the great pianist his mum wasn't able to become?
- Why do you think Marcolino is sorry his mum never became a great pianist? Does he feel responsible? Do you think it was his mum's intention to make him feel that way?
- Who do you think Marcolino should be playing the piano for? Who do you do the things you do for? Why do you them? If you did something you didn't enjoy just to try and please someone else, would you be able to stick at it? Why or why not?

### Page Nine & Ten



- Look carefully at the pictures. What is clever

about the way Marcolino's daydreams are presented in each picture?

- Create your own list of things you dream of being one day. Make them as simplistic or outlandish as you wish!
- Present 2 of these ideas in interesting pictures using the style of the artist, e.g. if you don't enjoy football training, draw your two pictures using a football as a base for your picture.
- Is there another word aside from 'great' that could be used to describe how good Marcolino wants to be at things? List as many synonyms for the word 'great' that you can.
- Which of the pictures appeals to you most? Why?
- How is Marcolino's mum portrayed in the pictures? Do you think this is an accurate portrayal of Marcolino's actual feelings towards her? Why or why not?

### Page Eleven

- Talk about grandfathers (or mothers). How are they important in a child's life? Ask 'what sort of things does your grandfather do with you?'
- Compare Marcolino's body language and facial expressions on this page to the previous pages. Make a list of similarities and differences. What does his changed expression make the reader think about his mood?
- Look at the items hanging in the background at the Science Museum. What do they represent? Have you ever been to a Science Museum? What sort of things did, or would you expect to see there?
- What places would you like your grandfather to take you regularly? Why?

### Page Twelve



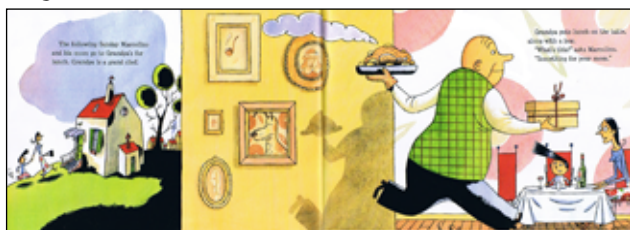
- The dialogue throughout the book is written without always using names to specify who is speaking. How do you know who is saying what and where they start and stop talking?
- Place a transparent plastic sheet over the page and ask for a volunteer to come and circle all the speech by Marcolino, have another volunteer circle the speech by Grandfather in a different colour. Al-



ternatively, circle all the opening quotation marks in one colour and closing quotation marks in another.

- What do you think makes Grandfather burst out laughing? Did he see something funny?

### Pages Thirteen & Fourteen



- What are some of the fine details the illustrator has used in designing the illustrations on these two pages? e.g. Why do you think the wallpaper has been made to look the same as the design on Mum's skirt?
- Who do you think Grandfather's photographs are of?
- Predict what could be in the box Grandfather has for Mum.
- Why do you think Mum is being given a present? Is it her birthday or a special occasion? Make a list of all the reasons for giving someone a gift!

### Pages Fifteen & Sixteen



- Compare the photos of Mum to the pictures on pages 9 and 10. What do you notice?
- What could the missing photo be of? Why do you think the photo is missing? Who could have taken it?
- What do you notice Mum not doing in any of the photos? (i.e. practising scales on the piano!)
- What do Mum's facial expressions tell you about her mood in the photos?

### Page Seventeen



- Why is the statement 'It's a photo of Mum at the piano!' written in a different style? Is it meant to stand out for some reason?
- What do you think was going through Marcolino's mind when he first saw the photo? What do you think Mum was thinking?
- Why do you think grandfather decided to show Marcolino and Mum all the other photos before bringing this one out?
- What do you see in the curtain design? Do you think the illustrator has run out of design ideas or is this repeated pattern used for a reason?
- Flip through the book and try to find other places where the illustrator has used similar designs for different items (e.g. Grandfather's vest and chair). Is there a pattern to these matches?

### Page Eighteen

- Why is Mum so embarrassed?
- Why do you think Grandfather chose this method to let Marcolino know about Mum's piano lessons when she was a child? Why didn't he come right out and tell him when they were at the museum?
- Why do you think Mum had forgotten about all this?
- What do you think is going to happen next? Will Marcolino still have to play the piano?
- In small groups ask students to jot down some ideas for how the story may end from here. Stick the ideas on the board to refer to again after reading the actual ending. Compare the real ending with the ones written by your students. Were any similar? Which ending do they prefer? Ask individual students to explain which they like best and why.

### Page Nineteen



- What could Mum and Grandfather be talking about in the kitchen? Do their expressions give you any clues? List some ideas.
- Why didn't Mum and Grandfather want Marcolino in the room while they were talking?
- Ask students why they think grandfather looks so happy when he comes into the lounge room. Did he really get a second piece of pie as Marcolino thought?

- Marcolino now knows that Mum didn't like playing the piano. What do you think he might do with this information? Will he try to convince mum that he doesn't like it either?

### Page Twenty

- Can students name the instruments in the music shop? Have any of them played one of these instruments before?
- What kinds of sounds do these instruments make?
- List all the instruments you can think of. If all these instruments were available in a music shop and you could pick any one, which would you choose?
- Marcolino is allowed to choose any instrument, which do you think he will choose? Why?
- Do you think Mum is happy with grandfather taking Marcolino to the music shop? Why or why not? Students could work in pairs and create for and against reasons for Marcolino choosing a new instrument. They could act out a scene where one student is mum arguing for why Marcolino should stick with piano, the second student is grandfather arguing for why Marcolino should choose a new instrument.

### Pages Twenty-One & Twenty-Two



- Which instrument has Marcolino chosen? Try to find out as much information about the tuba as you can.
- Why do you think he found the tuba so appealing?
- Why do you think that Marcolino always practises at 13 minutes past 3? What could be significant about that time? Brainstorm some possibilities. Do you think Marcolino ever practises at other times?
- What times would it be inappropriate for Marcolino to practise? Why? What would be some of the consequences of him playing the tuba at these times?
- Do you think Mum is happy with his choice of instrument? If she's not, why do you think she would be smiling?
- Compare all their expressions to their expressions on page four. What has changed?

sions on page four. What has changed?

- Why do you think Mum wants Marcolino to stop for a snack?

### Pages Twenty-Three & Twenty-Four



- How is Marcolino's attitude towards playing the tuba different to his attitude towards the piano? Why would this be?
- Look at the way the illustration is presented. Why is there a large swirl coming from the tuba? What does it represent?
- Students can draw a picture of the instrument they would choose to play and show the sound coming from it in an interesting manner.
- Do you like the ending? Is it a happy one?

### POST READING:

1. After reading the story, give students a photocopy of the pictures and ask them to sequence the story. Can they retell the story from the pictures? Discuss what is happening on each page.
2. Create a profile for one (or all) the characters in the story. Make sure you list not only their physical attributes, but talk about their personalities. Use as many descriptive words as you can. Do the characters' personas remain the same throughout the book or do they change in some way?
3. In small groups, have the children act out a dramatisation of the story. They could use various styles (eg. play, mime, puppetry). Have students make props to support the story. Ask them to clearly show the characteristics displayed in the story by the various characters.
4. Ask students to retell the story in their own words.
5. Play memory with the Music Shop page. Show the page, cover it and have students name the instruments they can remember. You can do this activity with the Science Museum pages also. Or with the detail on any page in fact. This is a good activity for fine tuning student's attention to detail.

## EXPANDING ON THE BOOK

1. Create a Venn Diagram using two of the characters (eg Marcolino and Mum) and write down (or draw) their attitudes, thoughts, feelings and some of their comments in the appropriate section. (ie two overlapping circles, Mum in one circle, Marcolino in the other and similarities to both characters in the centre overlap section). As an extension, students could create a 3-circle Venn Diagram, using all three characters.
2. Imagine you are Marcolino. Write a letter to mum, explaining why you don't want to play the piano. Make sure you include more than one reason for this and explain your reasons thoroughly.
3. Or imagine you are Mum. Write a letter to Marcolino detailing why you want him to play the piano. Make sure you include more than one reason for this and explain your reasons thoroughly.

## ASSESSMENT TOOLS

A worksheet based on this book which could be used for guided reading groups is available on the Wilkins Farago website ([www.wilkinsfarago.com.au](http://www.wilkinsfarago.com.au)).

Rubrics for English Progression Points (VELS) are available in a separate document. Rubrics for assessment based on the two activities above are also available in this document. Refer to the Wilkins Farago website ([www.wilkinsfarago.com.au](http://www.wilkinsfarago.com.au)).

For more information on rubrics, visit: [www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/assessment/preptoyear10/tools/rubrics.htm](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/assessment/preptoyear10/tools/rubrics.htm) and open the word document.

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## 3. About the author and illustrator

### DAVIDE CALI

Swiss-born Cali is one of Europe's most innovative and acclaimed writers for children.

He is the author of 12 illustrated books, including *A Dad Who Measures Up* (illustrated by Anna-Laura Cantone), *The Enemy* (illustrated by Serge Bloch), *Santa's Suit* (also illustrated by Eric Heliot) and *I Can't Wait* (illustrated by Serge Bloch), which won France's prestigious Baobab Prize for the most innovative book of 2005.

*I Can't Wait* was also named Honour Book in the American Library Association's annual Batchelder Award, for the best children's book translated into English.



His books have now been published in 15 countries. Davide lives in Genoa, Italy but writes in French. *Piano Piano* is the fourth of his books to be published in Australia and New Zealand. Davide's personal website can be found at [www.davidecali.com](http://www.davidecali.com).

### ERIC HELIOT

*Piano Piano*'s illustrator is one of France's most celebrated and successful book illustrators, with over 50 titles to his name. He studied at the Beaux-Arts in Rouen and Le Havre, France, before becoming a freelance illustrator of picture books and comic books. He still lives in Rouen, and likes to play the drums (which wins the friendship of his neighbours).

His illustrations for *Piano Piano* received Special Mention at the prestigious 2006 Bologna Ragazzi Awards. The book is the first of his works to be published in Australia and New Zealand.

## 4. About Wilkins Farago

Founded in 1998, we're an independent book publishing company based in Melbourne, Australia. We don't publish a lot of books, so we care about the ones we do publish. In recent years, we have developed a reputation for publishing acclaimed and award-winning children's books from

around the world, many of them translated into English for the first time. Through publishing the finest international children's books, we hope to expose children in Australia and New Zealand (and their parents and teachers) to new cultures, new perspectives, and new styles of illustration.