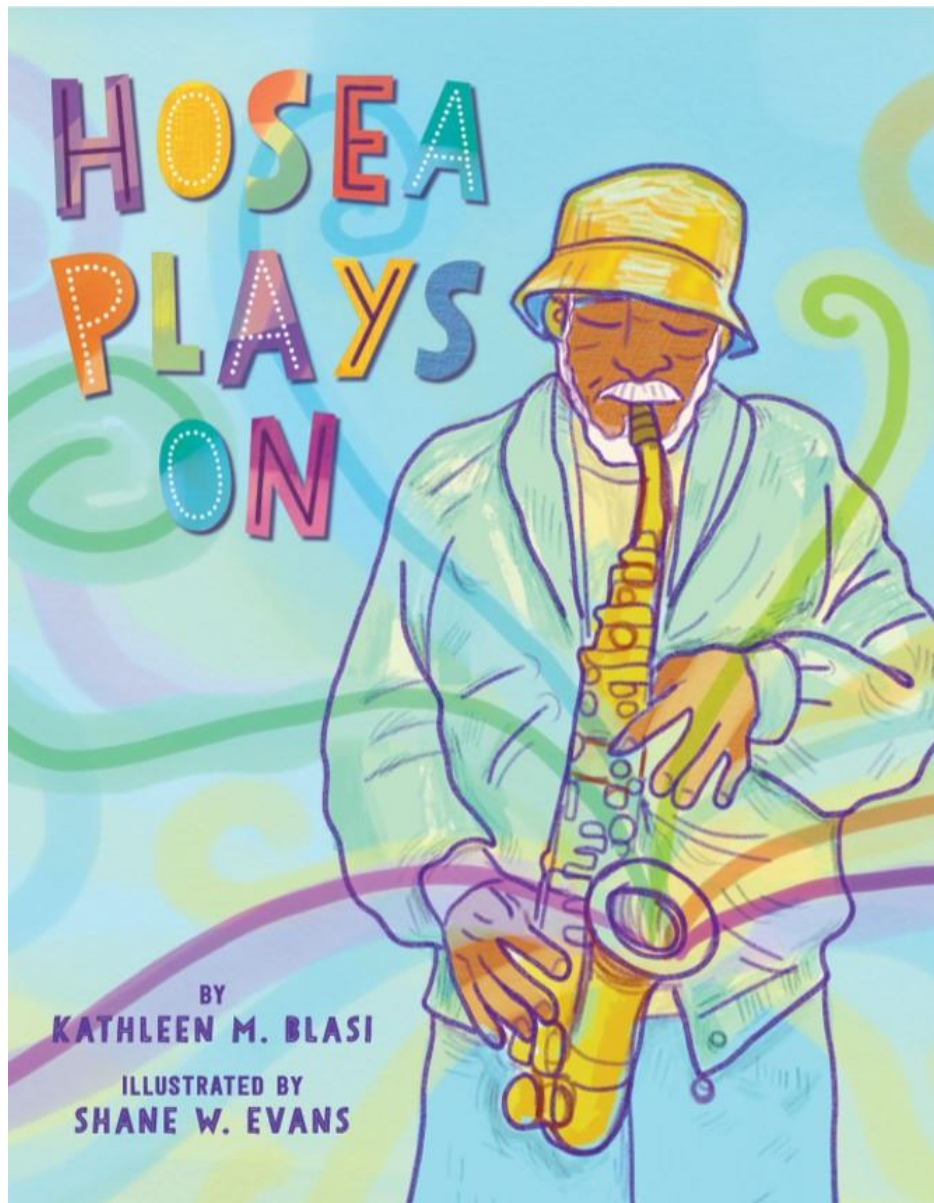


# Educators' Guide

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Sterling Children's Books; 2019. ISBN: 978-1454926832



## Summary

Hosea Missouri Taylor, Jr., was a musician with a mission. His skills at playing the saxophone, clarinet, trumpet, and flute were well-known at the City of Rochester (New York) Public Market. But he did so much more than merely entertain passersby. Hosea invested in young children in his community. He shared his passion for music by offering free music lessons and purchasing instruments for children who otherwise wouldn't have access. He led by example, and his community service bettered the lives of those he encountered. In this uplifting story based on the true life of a generous soul, readers and listeners have an opportunity to learn by example and explore ways in which we all can help others. Even seemingly simple actions can be powerful.

## About the Author

**Kathleen M. Blasi** enjoys writing about ordinary people who have an extraordinary impact—like Hosea Taylor of *Hosea Plays On* and Gaetana Curatolo of *A Name of Honor* (her debut novel). Active in the children's writing community, she is Co-President of the Rochester Area Children's Writers & Illustrators and a former Co-Director of the Rochester Children's Book Festival. Kathleen lives in Western New York, where, with a conviction that everyone has a story to tell, she presents to schools and libraries and conducts writing workshops; she delights in fostering the curiosity of young storytellers. Visit her at [www.kmblasi.com](http://www.kmblasi.com) and on Twitter @kmblasi.

## About the Illustrator

**Shane Evans** is the illustrator of many picture books whose accolades range from being honored by First Lady Laura Bush at the 2002 National Book Festival to The Boston Globe-Horn Book Award and the Orbis Pictus Award® for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children. In 2012, he won the Coretta Scott King Book Award for Illustrators for *Underground*. Shane Evans lives in Kansas City, Missouri. For more information, visit [shaneevans.com](http://shaneevans.com).

## Grade Levels: 1-4

**Why Choose This Book?** Hosea Missouri Taylor, Jr., endeavored to make a difference in many ways throughout his life, and his impact on the children in his community was far-reaching. Buoyant illustrations by Shane W. Evans in bright colors and an up-close perspective invite young listeners into this uplifting tale based on fact. Paired with well-crafted text, the book lends itself well to reading aloud. It opens with a teaser of sorts (and a perfect “purpose for reading”) on the first spread: *Maybe—just maybe—he would earn enough today*. Listeners will wonder: earn enough for what? This leads us into the story Blasi expertly weaves, gradually unveiling Hosea’s contributions to his community.

Witnessing through reading the ways in which real, everyday people make a difference provides children with valuable examples of how each of us can use our gifts to lift the spirits and lives of others. Such stories show, rather than tell, how we all have the power to choose to act with compassion, generosity, and community spirit. As Maxine Greene states (2000), reading allows young people to develop a “social imagination” they can use to envision various selves and perceptions of an equitable society. Once students can imagine a range of possible worlds, they are better prepared to begin building the ones they want to see. (*Educating for Empathy: Literacy Learning and Civic Engagement* by Nicole Mirra; Teachers College Press, 2018).





## Read-Aloud Plan for *Hosea Plays On*

### Getting Started

Begin the read-aloud by sharing the cover of the book. Ask children what they notice. (Man playing instrument, saxophone, title, author's and illustrator's names.) Draw attention to and discuss the less obvious but contributing features of the cover: the swirly lines depicting music (Open the book to the flyleaves!), the colors the illustrator chose and what feelings they evoke, the jaunty print font, the colorful lettering of the title. What does the cover promise us? What tone does it set for the story?

Ask children to ponder the title. Who do you think is the main character of this story? (Hosea.) What do we already know about Hosea? What might this book be about? What do you think *Hosea Plays On* means? Let's continue to think about that as we read the story.

**Develop and Build on Background Knowledge:** Who has heard a saxophone? What does a saxophone sound like? (Consider playing a brief piece of music featuring a saxophone.) Hosea is a street musician. What is a street musician? Share experiences briefly: Who has heard street musicians? Where were they playing? What instruments were they playing? Did you pause to listen? What do you recall about street musicians you have heard? Have you seen and heard a particular street musician more than once?



## While Reading

Open to the first spread of the book. What do we learn from the illustration? (Setting: city; season: fall; Hosea is packing up his saxophone.) Read the text. Pause to ask listeners what they are wondering. Consider the last line of text. Ponder possibilities. Set a purpose for reading: **Let's read to find out what Hosea hopes to earn enough money to buy.**

After reading the text on the next spread, ask children what they have learned about Hosea from his encounter with his young neighbor Nate. (Hosea takes time to greet and encourage young Nate. He validates Nate's interest in music. Hosea's body language conveys authentic interest and respect for his young neighbor.) What do we know about Nate? (He likes music; he is imaginative; he respects Hosea's passion for playing music.)

On the next spread point out the onomatopoeia. Ask children to help read the story by chorusing these words when you point to the text.

Read aloud the next four spreads. Pause to consider what we learn about Hosea from these scenes. (Hosea's love of playing music for others, his outgoing personality, his joking manner, his dedication and spirit.)

On the seventh spread, we find the words that comprise the title of the book. Delve deeper into the discussion begun earlier of what the title means.



On the next spread, we begin Act II of the story. We return to the mystery—Hosea has earned enough. He boards a bus—a different one than the bus he took in the morning—and he plans to make a stop before heading home. Where might Hosea be going?

Read the next spread. The mystery is solved, but there's still an unknown. For whom might Hosea be buying the trumpet?

After reading the next spread, reflect: Hosea not only makes music, he hears it in nature. Reread the descriptions of the “music of the day.” Why does Hosea have the trumpet behind his back?

Read the final two spreads, Act III of the story. Reflect on the conversation between Hosea and Nate. The author describes Nate's tune as “tangled.” How has the illustrator shown this, as well as the tune the two play together?



### Follow Up

Return to discussion of the title and what it means.

In the Author's Note, Blasi calls Hosea Missouri Taylor, Jr., a community advocate. Share why: Hosea's goal was to keep neighborhood kids active in positive ways. He offered free music lessons and purchased instruments for children. Every summer, the kids who took lessons participated in a neighborhood parade. Hosea also played his instruments on the streets of

**his city and in the public market. As a group, develop a definition of a community advocate. Ask children to provide examples of community advocates they know.**

(CCSS ELA RL: Literature Key Ideas and Details: Gr.1-4:1-3; Craft and Structure: Gr.1-4: 4-6; Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: Grades 1-4: 7; Vocabulary Acquisition & Use: Gr. 1-4: 5-6)



## **Beyond the Read-Aloud: Curriculum Connections**

### **English Language Arts**

#### **Writing**

*Hosea Plays On* opens with a scene in which Hosea sees, hears, and validates his young neighbor. Hosea offers Nate encouragement, and later Hosea presents him with an instrument and an opportunity to learn how to play it. Moreover, he provides Nate with a path in which to “play on.” Write about a person in your life who has provided you with an opportunity to “play on.” Describe the person, your relationship to the person, and detail how this person has helped you.

Blasi uses vivid verbs throughout the telling of Hosea’s story. Review the text as a group and identify vivid verbs she has chosen. List them on the smart board or chart paper. Discuss how they make the story come alive. Ask students to return to a piece of writing of their own and revise, exchanging more active and vibrant verbs for those they originally chose. Or, have students begin a new piece of writing with the aim of using vivid verbs to make the telling more appealing. Have students use colored pens or markers to highlight the vivid verbs they choose.

Similarly, Blasi uses musical words and rhythm in the telling of her story. In an interview with author James Preller, she stated, “Once my early draft took shape, part of my revision process was to focus on word choice that could carry a tune, so to speak. To build a cadence for the read-aloud experience. Similarly, I incorporated sound wherever I could, such as coins dropping and the sound of a truck passing over a bridge.” Review the text to find examples of words that help convey the music underlying the story. Have students choose an instrument to write about using words that give the reader the feel of the music that instrument produces.

Ask students to write about an experience in which they witnessed someone playing an instrument, whether on a street corner, at a family gathering, in a place of worship, in school, or at a concert. What did they notice about the person playing the instrument? What do they remember most from the experience? Did they enjoy the music? Why? Alternatively, ask children to write about their experiences playing an instrument.

Blasi became interested in writing about Hosea after reading a story in her local newspaper, the Rochester *Democrat and Chronicle*

(<https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2016/02/13/rochester-public-market-musician-hosea-taylor-dies/80338012/>). She went on to interview people and create her story based on the facts of his life. Have students read their local newspaper and select a story that appeals to them. What aspect of the story interests them? What would they like to know more about? What questions does the story spark? What questions would they ask if they had an opportunity to interview someone connected to the story? How could they learn more?

With older children, view the video on Blasi’s website in which she explains how she went from reading a newspaper article about Hosea to research, to writing and revision, to publishing a book about this everyday hero in her hometown: [www.kmblasi.com/books/](http://www.kmblasi.com/books/).

Read more here: <https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2020/02/07/hosea-plays-on-literary-tribute-musician-hosea-taylor-jr/4670188002/>





## Speaking / Listening

**Hosea's neighbor Nate uses a rake handle as an imaginary instrument. Ask children to prepare and share a story about a time when they used something in imaginative play. Encourage props and visuals.**

**Pair students and ask them to develop questions and conduct an interview with Nate about his music lessons with Hosea. Have students conduct their interviews before the group. How are they alike? How do they differ?**

(CCSS ELA W: Text Types and Purposes: Gr.2-4: 1-2; Research to Build and Present Knowledge: Gr.2-3:7-8; Gr.4:7-9; Range of Writing: Gr.3-4:10; CCSS ELA SL: Comprehension and Collaboration: Gr.2: 1-3; Gr.3-4:1-2; Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: Gr.2:6; Gr.3:4,6; Gr.4:4; CCSS ELA L: Gr.2-4:1-3; CCSS ELA L: Conventions of Standard English: Gr.2-4:1-2; Knowledge of Language: Gr.2-4:3; Vocabulary Acquisition & Use: Gr. 1-4: 5-6.)



## Social Studies

**Discuss the differences between fiction and nonfiction. In the Author's Note, Blasi explains that she used facts from Hosea's life to create a story that celebrated his goodness, friendship, and passion for music. Read the newspaper story about Hosea's life (<https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2016/02/13/rochester-public-market-musician-hosea-taylor-dies/80338012/>) and identify the facts Blasi used in her story. Re-read the text, employing close reading skills. Explore what is fact and what is fiction in the story Blasi created.**

**Read and compare books on a specific topic in history. Identify if they are historical fiction or nonfiction.**

(CCSS ELA RL: Literature Key Ideas and Details: Gr.4:1,3; Craft and Structure: Gr.2: 4; CCSS ELA W: Text Types and Purposes: Gr.2-4: 1-2; Research to Build and Present Knowledge: Gr.2-3:7-8; Gr.4:7-9; Range of Writing: Gr.3-4:10; CCSS ELA L: Conventions of Standard English: Gr.2-4:1-2; Knowledge of Language: Gr.2-4:3; Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. Gr. 1-4: 5-6)

**Locate Rochester, New York, on a state map. Locate the City of Rochester Public Market on a Rochester city map.**

Using a Rochester city bus map, trace the Number 25 bus route Hosea takes to get to the market. Trace the Number 39 bus route Hosea takes on his way home in order to stop at the music store.

Have students draw maps of the route their school bus takes. Share and compare.

Discuss community advocacy. Find examples in your community.

(CCSS ELA RL: Key Ideas and Details: Gr.2-4:1; ELA SL: Comprehension and Collaboration: Gr.2:1-3; Gr.3-4:1-2; Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: Gr.2:6; Gr.3:4, 6; Gr.4:4; CCSS ELA L: Conventions of Standard English: Gr.2-4: 1-2; Knowledge of Language: Gr.2-4:3; Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. Gr. 1-4: 5-6)



## Art

Music is an obvious tie-in for this book. Listen to the saxophone. Allow students to handle a saxophone if one is available. If possible, have someone who plays the saxophone perform for students and explain the instrument. Listen to the interview with Blasi in which she explains the research behind the writing of how Hosea plays his sax (<https://communivisionstudio.com/kathleen-m-blasi-on-her-childrens-book-hosea-plays-on/>). Review the words she chose to describe his tune.

For a list of additional picture books that celebrate the power of music in the lives of real people and imagined characters, go to <http://blog.judybradbury.com/2020/hosea-plays-on/>.

## Social-Emotional Learning Themes:

Selflessness, generosity of spirit, friendship, interpersonal relationships, kindness, compassion, community spirit, helpfulness, perspective, fortitude, resilience, self-reliance, respect, gentleness, gratitude, effort, creativity, understanding, connection, diversity, self-assurance, understanding, resourcefulness, dedication, civility





### More, More, More!

Create a **Reader's Theatre** script of a conversation between Hosea and Nate, beginning with the words on the spread showing Hosea presenting Nate with the saxophone.

Read aloud the **dedications** from the author and the illustrator in the front of the book. Ask children to write a dedication for one of their favorite pieces of writing.

Read the **summary** on the inside flap on the front cover. Ask: What details about the story are revealed here? Which of the details are most important? Least important? Which words make you want to read this book?

Read the author and illustrator **bios** on the flap on the back cover. Ask students to write their bios! Limit word count to 125 words.

(CCSS ELA W: Text Types and Purposes: Gr.2-4: 1-2; Research to Build and Present Knowledge: Gr.2-3:7-8; Gr.4:7-9; Range of Writing: Gr.3-4:10; CCSS ELA SL: Comprehension and Collaboration: Gr.2: 1-3; Gr.3-4:1-2; Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: Gr.2:6; Gr.3:4,6; Gr.4:4; CCSS ELA L: Gr.2-4:1-3; CCSS ELA L: Conventions of Standard English: Gr.2-4:1-2; Knowledge of Language: Gr.2-4:3; Vocabulary Acquisition & Use: Gr. 1-4: 5-6.)

Common Core State Standards addressed by the suggested questions and activities are noted throughout. For more information on the CCSS, visit <http://www.corestandards.org/>.

*The discussion questions and activities in this guide were developed by children's author and educational consultant Judy Bradbury ([www.judybradbury.com](http://www.judybradbury.com)). Judy connects children's books that "open minds and hearts, initiate conversations, and expand possibilities" to curriculum on her Children's Book Corner blog ([blog.judybradbury.com/](http://blog.judybradbury.com/)).*

