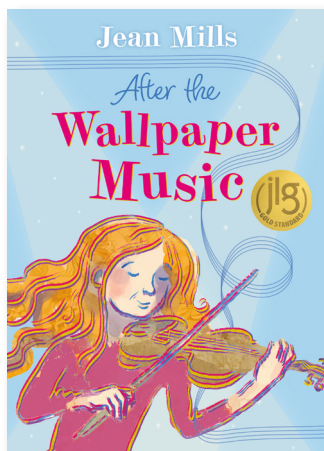


*This Teacher's Guide was written by award-winning author and middle-school teacher, **Colleen Nelson**. Colleen Nelson earned her Bachelor of Education from the University of Manitoba. She is the author of the award-winning middle-grade novels *Harvey Holds His Own*, *The Undercover Booklist*, *The Umbrella House*, and *Mystery at the Biltmore*.*



Story Summary

For twelve-year-old violinist Flora, growing up doesn't always mean growing apart. But when a Battle of the Bands starts to divide Flora's friend group, she knows that music will either separate them or bring them back together again.

Playing violin makes twelve-year-old Flora feel alive, whether she is playing with her friends in their string quartet or playing fiddle for her Auntie Flora.

When a music competition is announced, Flora wants her string quartet to play a classical song like they always do, but her friends want to play something new. Then, Simon, a talented drummer, who is struggling with a recent loss, invites Flora to join his rock trio. Pulled in several directions, Flora must decide if she is willing to risk her friendships by playing in Simon's band. For Flora, finding harmony with her friends, family, and music just became more difficult.

Celebrated author Jean Mills utilizes her musical talents in this uplifting novel that showcases the joys of music, and the power it has to bring people together.

Juvenile Fiction Ages 8–12 | ISBN: 978-1-77278-322-3 | Pages: 240

Reading Level

Fountas & Pinnell : W

Lexile: 680L

BISAC Codes

JUV031040 JUVENILE FICTION / Performing Arts / Music

JUV039060 JUVENILE FICTION / Social Themes / Friendship

JUV039030 JUVENILE FICTION / Social Themes / Death, Grief, Bereavement

JUV035000 JUVENILE FICTION / School & Education

JUV013030 JUVENILE FICTION / Family / Multigenerational

Pre-reading

- As a class, make a list of musical genres. Vote on which genres are the class's top three favorites.
- If you could only listen to three songs for the rest of your life, what would you choose?
- There are two classical pieces author Jean Mills references in the book. Listen to them as a class.
 - [Joseph Haydn // String Quartet in C Major, op. 76, no. 3 \("Emperor"\) // The Amber Quartet \(youtube.com\)](#)
 - [Final Fantasy XIII: Lightning's Theme \(youtube.com\)](#)
 - Divide a paper in half and draw what you feel as you listen to each piece. Share what you've drawn with a partner.
- What do you think the title *After the Wallpaper Music* means?

During Reading

Chapter 1-6

- Foreshadowing is a technique that author's use to draw the reader into the story and build suspense. Look at the last line of chapter 4. What do you think will happen next?
- On page 32, Auntie Flora says the song "Time is a Fickle Friend" brought her many happy memories. What's a song that brings you happy memories?
- By the end of chapter 6, we've seen many ways music is integrated into Flora and her family's life. Using specific scenes or quotes from the book, find as many examples as you can.
- Finish the sentence as if you were Flora: "Music is..." Write the sentence on a cue card and illustrate it for a bulletin board display outside of your school's music room.

Chapter 7-13

- In chapters 8 and 9, Flora wrestles with how to appease her bandmates and stay true to her musical tastes. What advice would you give to her? Do you think she made the right decision?
- On page 56, we learn the definition of 'wallpaper music.' Were you correct in your guess from the pre-reading section?
- What qualities make a band successful? Brainstorm with a partner and share your findings with a small group of 4-5 students. Then, discuss and narrow the list down to the top 3 most important qualities. You are working on critical thinking and reasoning in this exercise. Share your choices with the whole class.
- On page 84, we finally meet Simon's dad, Theo DeLuca. Have you ever met anyone famous? What are some pros and cons about being famous.

Chapter 14-20

*Writer's Craft Moves: Supporting Characters

- Supporting characters are important elements of a story. When well-written, they add interest and develop the main character through their interactions. Let's dive into the supporting characters in *After the Wallpaper Music*.
- List some of the supporting characters we've met so far. Which of the supporting characters would you want to be friends with?
- How has Jean Mills used these characters to develop Flora's character? Consider specific scenes where we learned more about Flora because of a conversation or interaction with a supporting character.
- Supporting characters often help the main character learn lessons. They can be a guide, a foil, or a friend. A guide helps a character, a foil contrasts the main character, and a friend supports a character. Make a chart with these three categories. Where would you put each of the supporting characters?
- Writing tip: In your own writing, consider how you can develop a supporting character to add depth and interest to the story.

Chapter 21-33

- On page 159, Flora uses 'tunes' to pull her out of a melancholy mood. What do you do to get into a better headspace?
- Writer's Craft Moves: Limiting Information
- Authors show the reader what they want them to see. In *After the Wallpaper Music*, we see the characters through Flora's eyes since she's the narrator. Using quotes from chapters 21-27, what conclusions has Flora made about Simon that we, as readers, can also make?
- At the end of chapter 29, Flora comes up with a plan. Using what you've learned about Flora and music, make a prediction.
- Why did Jean Mills choose to end the book with the last line: "Tell me about your little sister," I say. "Tell me about Grace."

After Reading

- Vitamin String Quartet is a classical crossover quartet that covers contemporary music using stringed instruments. Listen to some of their songs on Spotify and choose which one Flora, Vlad, Bas, and Kristy should do for their next performance.
- Choose two of the following quotes and explain why they are important to the story.

- “Death is a part of life.”—Auntie Flora (p. 13)
- Simon DeLuca is a hard person to be kind to. —Flora (p. 14)
- “Sharing grief with people is a kindness.” —Auntie Flora (p. 87)
- It’s where I learned that my violin has another voice. A third voice, if you count the times it transforms into a fiddle playing tunes... —Flora (p. 129)
- We all know we’re looking at someone who lost a child, and maybe a bit of her husband as well, in that accident.—Flora, about Mrs. DeLuca (p. 192)
- “Play me some tunes, Ducky.” —Auntie Flora (p. 216)
- Make a playlist with at least five songs for your family or friend group. What song would you pick to represent each person? Is it the lyrics, music, message, or memory that draws you to a certain song? Explain your choices in a short write-up.
- Auntie Flora plays an important role in her namesake’s life. Who is an important family member to you? Why did you pick this person?
- Use Song Maker on Chrome Music Lab ([Chrome Music Lab \(chromeexperiments.com\)](https://chromeexperiments.com)) to create a song.

Bonus:

- *The term ‘Writer’s Craft Moves’ is from Penny Kittle’s excellent book on teaching writing skills ‘Micro Mentor Texts: Using Short Passages From Great Books to Teach Writer’s Craft’.
- Here is Jean Mills’s original song, “Time is a Fickle Friend,” that she wrote for *After the Wallpaper Music* (performed by Isabella Deeley). Does it sound the way you thought it would?



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