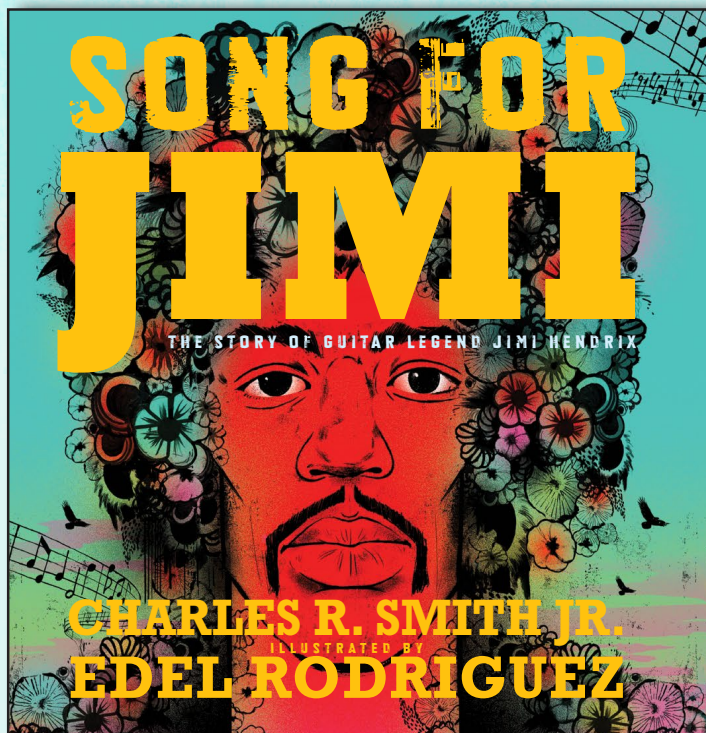


HOLIDAY HOUSE EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



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NEAL PORTER BOOKS

Song for Jimi: *The Story of Guitar Legend* *Jimi Hendrix*

by Charles R. Smith Jr.

illustrated by Edel Rodriguez

ABOUT THE BOOK

Song for Jimi captures the rich account of the guitar legend's singular life in pulsing, rhythmic verse with spectacular artwork.

*Let me tell you a story,
a story 'bout a boy,
who became a man,
a git-tar man,
named Jimi.*

From his turbulent childhood through his epic appearances at the Monterey Pop and Woodstock festivals, Charles R. Smith Jr. covers it all in this rich and rhythmic account of a singular life, accompanied by the psychedelic splendor of Edel Rodriguez's acid-tinged artwork.

Written as a series of verses beginning with intro and ending with outro, this unique mix of rhythm and rhyme captures the essence of rock icon Jimi Hendrix and his struggle to live life on his own terms.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Discuss the structure of the book. How is it written like a song? Explain each part of the song: intro, outro, and the five verses. Discuss how this is an effective way to reveal the life and career of Jimi Hendrix.
- Discuss the meaning of "psychedelic." The illustrations are described as "psychedelic art," an art movement of the 1960s. This style was known for highly distorted visuals, bright colors, and animation that evoked "psychedelic" feelings. Point out the illustrations that are animated and distorted. How is this an appropriate art style for a story about Jimi Hendrix?
- Jimmy Hendrix had a very unhappy childhood. How did he deal with his unhappiness? What does it mean that he "lived the blues" (p. 8)? Where did Jimmy gain his strength? How did he find comfort in art? At what point did he discover music? Describe the music he played before he acquired his first guitar. Study the illustration on pages 10 and 11. Explain the two guitars, one in each hand. How do the guitars become the focal point of the illustration?



- How does Jimmy react when he hears that his mother had died? Why didn't his father allow him to go to the funeral? Explain how this experience found its way into Jimmy's music. Why did Al, Jimi's father, call his music "the devil's music"?
- Read aloud Verse 2. Why do you think the verse is titled "Red Hands"? Explain the following lines: "And that git-tar became a voice for Jimi's soul, and that git-tar made Jimi's broken life whole" (p. 13). Jimi Hendrix died at the age of twenty-seven. Debate whether his life was ever really made whole.
- Jimmy didn't do well in school. How did his music teacher discourage Jimi's music? Why would a teacher ask a talented musician to give up on his dream? Explain how this made Jimi more determined. Chart his musical path from that moment forward. How and where did he get his first big break?
- Jimi's desire for freedom is mentioned throughout the book. Discuss his idea of freedom. Contrast his desire for freedom with the way his mother felt when she left home. Why is Verse 3 titled "Sunshine Yellow"? Explain the following simile: "Free as the yellow sun shining in the sky" (p. 19). Think about the color yellow. Why is it an appropriate color for "freedom"?
- Explain the meaning of each line in the first stanza of Verse 4 "Peacock with a Pick" (p. 21).

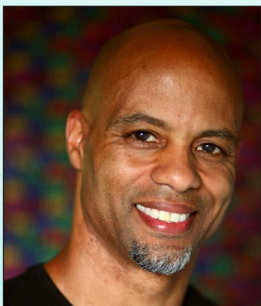
*With Blues in his heart
Fire in his hand
And mud on his boots, Jimmy stood as a man.*

- How does this reveal Jimmy's long journey to become Jimi?
- In a Note from the Author, Smith says that he didn't want to end the book with Jimi's death. How is this symbolic that his music lives on? Explain the author's dedication: "Dedicated to all the outcasts, misfits, and unique individuals who, like Jimi, want to wave their freak flag high." How was Jimi Hendrix an outcast and a misfit? Explain how his uniqueness made him a music sensation. What was Jimi's "freak flag"?

Guide created by Pat Scales, retired school librarian and independent consultant, Greenville, South Carolina.

ABOUT THE CREATORS

Photo credit: Charles R. Smith Jr.



Charles R. Smith Jr. is an award-winning children's book author, photographer, and poet with over thirty books to his credit. His awards include a Coretta Scott King Award for Illustration for his photographs interpreting the Langston Hughes poem in *My People*, and a Coretta Scott King Author Honor Award for his biography on Muhammad Ali, *Twelve Rounds to Glory*. His most recent work is *Song for Jimi: The Story of Guitar Legend Jimi Hendrix*, illustrated by Edel Rodriguez. Charles lives in Poughkeepsie, New York.

Photo credit: Deborah Feingold



Edel Rodriguez was born in Havana, Cuba. He has received the Gold Medal from the Society of Illustrators and for many years was the art director of *Time* Magazine. Books he has illustrated include *Mama Does the Mambo* by Katherine Leiner, *Float Like a Butterfly* by Ntozake Shange, and *Song for Jimi: The Story of Guitar Legend Jimi Hendrix* by Charles R. Smith. Edel lives in New Jersey with his wife and daughter.

