

## Lesson 2

### ***Mama's Nightingale: A Literature- based Discussion About The Immigrant Experience***

#### GRADES 3 – 5 MODULE OVERVIEW

Lesson 1: Establishing Community (120 minutes)	Lesson 2: The Immigrant Experience: Literature-based Discussion <i>Mama's Nightingale</i> (120 –180 minutes)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Activity 1: Symbols for Me</li> <li>▪ Activity 2: My Emoji</li> <li>▪ Activity 3: “Disbelief to Despair” - Expressing Feelings through Poetry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Discussion 1: Coping with Separation</li> <li>▪ Discussion 2: Pain of Separation</li> <li>▪ Discussion 3: Despair and Acceptance</li> <li>▪ Discussion 4: Persistence and Hope</li> <li>▪ Discussion 5: Fighting for Justice</li> </ul>

#### **Preface**

The use of literature to discuss and understand the human experience is a demonstrable vehicle to share opinions, feelings and emotions through the characters’ experiences and story events. As students study a particular text to arrive at the understanding of the author’s message and make connections between the characters and their own lives, not only can a safe place to share thoughts and feelings be created but students can arrive at a better understanding of themselves and others. This story was selected because of its strong connection to the realities that some of our students might be experiencing or the stress and fear they might be suffering as a result of worrying about their family or friends migratory status. With this in mind, the lesson can last for several days to provide students with the time and space to explore and share their feelings and emotions about immigration and help support the social and emotional educational needs of this student population.

#### **Story Summary**

This story is about a Haitian family that is separated when the mother is sent to an immigration detention center as a result of her undocumented status. Despite the father’s efforts, including letters to the media and to politicians, his wife is still at the detention center after three months of trying to get her home. Their daughter, Saya, finds comfort listening to the bedtime stories her mother tapes and sends to her from the detention center. One day, after another of her father’s unsuccessful attempts, Saya decides to write a letter telling their story and sends it to the

newspaper. Her letter gets published and thanks to the public's reaction, Saya's mother is freed and able to return home while waiting for the normalization of her status.

This story lends itself very well to an integrated unit on Immigration to meet History and Social Science Standards (HSS). (See list of standards in Section II)

**I. Objectives**

1. Learn that words have power and that there are ways to fight for the rights of the undocumented.
2. Use the story as a springboard for students to share their fears and thoughts about detention, deportation and separation.

**II. Standards**

ELA Reading Standards: Strands 1, 2, 3 6 and 7  
ELA Speaking and Listening: Strands 1 and 2  
ELD Standards: I.A.1, I.B.5 & 6, I.C.11  
HSS Standards: 3.3.3, 4.4.3, 4.4.4 & 5.8.5

**III. Materials and Resources**

1. Literature Book – *Mama's Nightingale* by Edwidge Danticat, Dial Books-Penguin Group, New York, 2015
2. Literature Logs
3. World map or map of North America
4. Power Point – [Haiti](#) (See attached PPTX file)
5. Student Resources for Culture Quilt- paper, markers, pens
6. Teacher Resource – Sample Character Feelings Graphic Organizer

**IV. Vocabulary**

Immigration ( <i>imigración</i> )	detention (detención)	judge	bench
Tape recorder	cassette	courtroom	

**V. Introduction**

1. Ask students how they or their parents stay in touch with family and friends that live too far to visit or see everyday.
2. Ask why they think it is important to stay in touch. Chart ideas.
3. How does it make them feel when they hear from that person? Ask students to share a personal story. Share your personal story if students are reluctant to share.

## VI. Input

1. Read the full title as you show the cover. If applicable, remind students of the poem "*Disbelief to Despair*" they read. Ask students to predict what they think the story might be about based on the title – *Mama's Nightingale, a Story of Immigration and Separation*. Chart their ideas.
2. If students have begun an immigration unit in their Social Studies and have discussed and listed reasons for immigrating, tap into their prior knowledge on the topic. If not, in collaborative groups, ask students to create the following:  
Grade 3: List reasons why people immigrate to the United States.  
Grades 4 & 5: Draw a two-column list citing 1) some of the reasons why people immigrate to the United States, and 2) the challenges and risks immigrants face coming to the United States.
3. Have students share their ideas. Create a Class Chart. Make sure it includes poverty, educational opportunities, persecution, war, etc. Conclude by asking, *Do the reasons for immigrating outweigh the challenges and risks?*
4. Ask students to describe what they see and how they think the characters are feeling. Ask what they see in the illustration that helps them.
5. If students don't bring it up, explain that a nightingale is a bird known for its beautiful song.
6. Tell students that the characters' background is Haitian. Show Haiti on a map and explain that in Haiti they speak a type of French. Guide students to notice that Haiti is part of an island.  
Grades 4-5: If students have background knowledge about Haiti encourage them to explain what they know.
7. Explain that in the last 6 years Haiti has suffered devastating earthquakes and hurricanes, which have made things extremely difficult for the people who are very poor. This desperate situation has forced many Haitians to leave their country. (See PowerPoint).
8. Ask, *how does the fact that Haiti is an island might impact the ways the people are able to travel/leave the country. How does it compare to immigrants from Central and South America?*
9. Show the PowerPoint provided to allow students to have a more visual, concrete idea of the context. [Haiti PPT \(See attached PPT\)](#)

## VII. Reflective Discussion

< Section 1 (pp. 4-7) – Read Aloud. Show and discuss the illustrations.>

1. Page 4-5 – Mention that later they will learn that the girl's name is Saya. What does the girl do to stay in touch with her Mama? Why?
2. Begin a Character's Feelings graphic organizer to track the emotional toll this experience is taking on the main character and how she faces the challenges. Teacher should create a class organizer while students fill in their own.

Narrator - Saya is...		
Evidence	Feelings	Why
Beginning	- pg. 4 - comforted	- She listens to her mother's voice in the message.
Middle		
End		

3. Ask students to identify who is narrating/telling the story (point of view). How do we know?
4. Page 6  
 <Think-Pair-Share>  
 In pairs, ask students to discuss what happened to the girl's mom and why. Compare to their predictions by returning to the Chart. Reread if needed to support students' understanding.
  - b. Why does Saya say "*We have no good news*"?
  - c. Now that you know what happened to the mother, how do you think the girl feels about having erased her mother's phone greeting?
  - d. Have students write down their opinion in their graphic organizer. Do a whip around to hear students' ideas. Guide students to include other feelings beyond "sad".
5. Page 7 Ask:
  - a. What is Saya's father trying to do to solve their problem?
  - b. Do you know anyone or have you heard about someone who experienced or is experiencing the same thing as this family? Are you worried/afraid that this could happen to someone in your family? Why or why not?
  - c. The father is trying to get help. How do they feel? Do you know what people can do to get help? Tell students that you will share information about how families in this situation can get help (Refer to resources in the Toolkit).
  - d. <Table Talk>  
 In their table groups, have students discuss, Where could the girl go if her father was also detained for lack of documents?  
Grades 4-5: What should families do in that case? Guide students to understand the idea of creating an emergency plan and the importance of discussing this with the family.  
 TEACHER NOTE: If possible use prompt 5b for students to write an entry in their Literature Logs and have them share in small groups to foster the sharing of feelings and listening to each other.

Narrator - Saya is...		
Evidence	Feelings	Why
Beginning	- pg. 4 <b>comforted</b> - pg. 6 <b>sad, scared, lonely</b> - pg. 7 <b>discouraged, hopeless, worried</b>	- She listens to her mother's voice in the message. - She erased her mom's message and now will not have any part of her mother with her. - No one answers her dad's letters asking for help.
Middle		
End		

< Section 2 (pp. 8-11) – Read Aloud. Show and discuss the illustrations. >

1. Page 8 -9: Ask, *What did you learn in this page?* (They visit the mother each week at the Detention Center)
  - b. Guide students to make connections between the information on the page and the book's title.
  - c. Discuss the role of the nightingale in Haitian folklore – protector of children.
2. Page 10-11 Ask:
  - a. What happens when it is time for Saya and her Dad to leave the Detention Center?
  - b. How does Saya feel and how does she react? How does she describe it?
  - c. They go every week to see Mama, why do you think she reacted that way this time?
3. Literature Log: Write about a time you were away from your mother or father or one of your parents was away for a while. Describe how you felt. How did it compare to Saya's feelings?

<b>Narrator - Saya is...</b>		
<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Feelings</b>	<b>Why</b>
<b>Beginning</b>	pg. 4 <b>comforted</b>  pg. 6 <b>sad, scared</b>  pg. 7 <b>discouraged, hopeless, worried</b>	- She listens to her mother's voice in the message. - She erased her mom's message and now will not have any part of her mother with her. - No one answers her dad's letters asking for help.
	pg. 8 - <b>happy/ contented, secured</b> pg.10 - <b>angry, desperate</b> pg 11 - <b>heartbroken</b>	- Being with her mother - Having to leave her mother - Being separated from her mother and knowing she doesn't even have the taped message to listen to her voice. <i>"I miss her so much my belly aches"</i>
<b>Middle</b>		
<b>End</b>		

< Section 3 (pp. 12-16) – Read Aloud. Show and discuss the illustrations. >

- Pages 12-13: Ask: What happened? How do you think Saya felt?  
 b. Reread the paragraph and ask, Why might the tape recorder be important in the story. What do we use now that is like a tape recorder?  
 c. Literature Log: Hearing her mother's voice in the tape recorder helped Saya feel close to her, what helps you or has helped you feel close to someone you love when he/she is away?
- Pages 14-15: How does Saya feel hearing the story? Why?
- Pages 16-17: How is it like now for Saya to visit her mother at the Detention Center?  
 b. <Numbered Heads Together>  
 - In groups, assign a number from 1-4.  
 - Ask the groups to discuss the question below. Explain that when you call a given number, all students with that number will stand and share up their group's ideas.  
 c. Reread the sentence in page 16: *"I don't ask when she's coming home, because she doesn't know either"*. What do you think she means?  
 - How does Saya feel?

Narrator - Saya is...		
Evidence	Feelings	Why
Beginning	pg. 4 <b>comforted</b>  pg. 6 <b>sad/scared</b>  pg. 7 <b>discouraged/hopeless/worried</b>	- she listens to her mother's voice in the message. - she erased her mom's message and now will not have any part of her mother with her. - no one answers her dad's letters asking for help.
	pg. 8 - <b>happy/secured/contented</b> pg.10 - <b>angry, desperate</b> pg 11 - <b>heartbroken</b>	-Being with her mother -Having to leave her -Being separated from her and knowing she doesn't even have the taped message to listen to her voice. " I miss Mama so much my belly aches."
Middle	pg. 13 – <b>surprised, excited, curious</b>  pg. 15- <b>closeness, loved</b>  pg. 16 – <b>resigned, aware</b>	- Wants to hear her mother's voice and what she says in her message. - Hearing her mother's voice and her stories  -She doesn't ask because she knows her mother can't come home and it would upset her mother if she cries
End		

< Section 4 (pp. 18 – 25) – Read Aloud as you show the illustrations. >

1. Pages 18 -19: Why does Saya decide to write a letter? Do you think it will make a difference? Why?  
 If needed, reread pg 18, especially the last paragraph – *"He suddenly looks sadder than sad, as though Mama might never come home again."*  
 b. How do you think Saya felt while writing the letter? If you were Saya, what would you have done? What have you seen or heard on TV or radio people doing in this situation?
2. Pages 20-21: What happened when they sent the letter? Why do you think the newspaper responded to Saya and not to her dad?  
 b. How do you think Saya feels? How about her dad?  
 c. What do you think might happen now?
3. Pages 22-23: What else do we learn about Saya's mother?
4. Pages 24-25: Why is the family in the courtroom?  
 b. Why does Saya feel proud?  
 c. What went through your mind while we read this?

<b>Narrator - Saya is...</b>		
<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Feelings</b>	<b>Why</b>
<b>Beginning</b>	pg. 4 <b>comforted</b>  pg. 6 <b>sad/scared</b>  pg. 7 <b>discouraged/hopeless/worried</b>	- she listens to her mother's voice in the message. - she erased her mom's message and now will not have any part of her mother with her. - no one answers her dad's letters asking for help.
	pg. 8 - <b>happy/secured/contented</b> pg.10 - <b>angry, desperate</b> pg 11 - <b>heartbroken</b>	-Being with her mother -Having to leave her -Being separated from her and knowing she doesn't even have the taped message to listen to her voice. <i>"I miss Mama so much my belly aches"</i>
<b>Middle</b>	pg. 13 – <b>surprised, excited, curious</b> pg. 15- <b>closeness, loved</b> pg. 16 – <b>resigned, aware</b>	- Wants to hear her mother's voice and what she says in her message. - Hearing her mother's voice and her stories -She doesn't ask because she knows her mother can't come home and it would upset her mother if she cries.
<b>End</b>	pg. 19- <b>concerned, helpful</b> pg. 21- <b>surprised, hopeful</b> pg. 25- <b>proud, grateful, excited</b>	-Wants to help her mom and dad -The media is finally telling their story. -Saya's mother is coming home, thanks to the public outcry.

< Section 5 (pp. 26 – 28) – Read Aloud as you show the illustrations. >

1. Read all pages to the end. Allow students to react to the ending.
2. Reread the last sentence – *"I like that it is our words that brought us together again."*

<Whip – Around>

Ask each student to share what that sentence means to them. Remind students that they have the right to pass.

As part of the community, share your own feelings and ideas after students share.



<b>Narrator - Saya is...</b>		
<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Feelings</b>	<b>Why</b>
<b>Beginning</b>	pg. 4 <b>comforted</b>  pg. 6 <b>sad/scared</b>  pg. 7 <b>discouraged/hopeless/worried</b>	- she listens to her mother's voice in the message - she erased her mom's message and now will not have any part of her mother with her - no one answers her dad's letters asking for help
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<b>Middle</b>	pg. 13 – <b>surprised, excited, curious</b>  pg. 15- <b>closeness, loved</b>  pg. 16 – <b>resigned, aware</b>	- Wants to hear her mother's voice and what she says in her message - Hearing her mother's voice and her stories -She doesn't ask because she knows her mother can't come home and it would upset her mother if she cries
	pg. 19- <b>concerned, helpful</b> pg. 21- <b>surprised, hopeful</b>  pg. 25- <b>proud, grateful, excited</b>	-Wants to help her mom and dad -Their story being told on TV and newspapers -Saya's mother is coming home, thanks to the public outcry.
<b>End</b>	pg. 29 – <b>proud, happy, complete</b>	-Learns that words have power -Glad that what she did helped her mother come home -They are all together again

### VIII. Closure

- Now that we have finished reading the story, which passage/event will you remember or which part stands out for you?
- Reviewing the Graphic Organizer, what does it tell us about the feelings/emotions and experiences Saya went through?
- <Numbered Heads Together>  
A nightingale can sometimes symbolize beauty and freedom. Now that you read the story, why do you think the author titled the story "*Mama's Nightingale*"? What does the nightingale represent in this story and why?
- What do you think the author is trying to tell us (author's message) with this story?
- We have listened to one another's thoughts and ideas, is there anything that someone else said that surprised you or taught you something?

### **IX. Follow up/Extension Activities**

The following activities may be carried out after reading the story.

1. Ask students to look in a newspaper, watch TV or listen to the radio for news about immigration to bring back and share with the class. This activity might be continued throughout the unit.
2. Saya learned about the power of children's words to change minds and hearts. Write a letter to a newspaper, Congress or the President of the U.S. giving your opinion about immigration.

3. Read the Author's Note (pp. 30-31)

Ask students to explain what they understand it means to be "without papers" or undocumented. If needed, define the concept by explaining that an undocumented person lacks the necessary documents to live and work in the United States. To do so you usually need to be a permanent resident. Explain that there are certain requirements you need to meet in order to be a permanent resident. A permanent resident receives a card called Permanent Resident or "Green" Card that allows them to travel and re-enter the United States. Similar to

a driver's license that proves you can drive, a Green Card serves as proof that you are allowed to live in the US.

b. Grade 5: Give students the choice to research one of the following:

- 1) the rights of an immigrant "without papers"
- 2) the challenges to obtain permanent residency.

Students can present their findings by creating a Power Point, Flow Chart or any other visual aid to support their explanation.

4. Class Cultural Quilt

Distribute 8-12 inch squares of white or light colored construction paper. Using markers or collage materials have students create an image on their square that represents their family. Guide students to use diverse materials such as photographs. Reinforce the squares with cardboard and make holes around the edges to lace the squares together with yarn. Display the quilt and have students present their square to the class. Discuss the idea of cultural difference and the richness that accepting and appreciating each other's differences can provide us.

*Cuadros de Familia* by Carmen Lomas Garza (Children's Book Press, San Francisco, 2005) could serve as springboard for ideas to depict the traditions, family values, and experiences in their own lives.

5. Hall of Fame

Invite the class to create a Hall of Fame of immigrants who are important to their lives. It could be someone in their family or a friend. Have students draw a

likeness of the person and write a two-paragraph biography. In the first paragraph have them write the name (can be just the first name) and relationship to themselves, birthplace, date the person came to the U. S. and the reason for coming. The second paragraph should explain the person's accomplishments and the obstacles they have faced, e.g., worked in restaurants for 20 years, learned to be a sushi chef.

6. Recognizing Interconnecting Themes

Read *North to South* by Rene Colato Lainez, Children's Book Press, New York, 2010 and compare and contrast the two stories similarities and differences in the ways families are separated and affected by current immigration policies and how they cope and face the challenges.

7. Additional Read Alouds

- *Undocumented Immigrants* by Sarah Howell, PowerKids Press, New York, 2015.

This informational text uses brief and easy to understand explanations suitable for elementary grade students about reasons for undocumented immigration, rights, deportation, sanctuary city, etc. The book is easy to read or paraphrase and lends itself readily to pick and choose sections as the text is organized by topics. Their website related to the subject is regularly updated – [www.powerkidslinks.com/mosa/undoc](http://www.powerkidslinks.com/mosa/undoc)

- *The Journey* by Francesca Sanna, Flying Eye Books, London-New York, 2016.

This is the story of a mother and her two children who escape their war torn country in search for a new life. Without documents, they pay their way crossing many borders. The book is an allegory for the difficult personal journeys of immigrants and refugees and the different paths they take towards a better future.

- *How Many Days to America?* by Eve Bunting, Clarion Books, New York, 1988.

Describes the ocean crossing of a group of people fleeing their island country and journeying to America. The ending is rather idealized but could serve as a good point of discussion on the plight of refugees and immigrants and the current realities.

- *Stepping Stones* by Margriet Ruurs, Orca Book Publishers, British Columbia, 2017

A picture book about a Syrian family that are forced to leave their village escaping the ravages of the civil war taking place in their country and set out with only what they can carry on their backs to walk towards freedom in Europe.