TeachersFirst READING TREKS

Front Desk

Teacher Guide

Access Reading Trek Map

Grade Level & Content Areas

Ages: 8–12
Grades: 3–7
Reading Level: 6th grade
Lexile Measure: 640L
Guided Reading Level: V
Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA): 50

Content Areas: English/language arts, social studies (including individual development, identity, and geography), social-emotional learning (SEL), writing.

Synopsis of Book

Front Desk by Kelly Yang follows Mia Tang, a ten-year-old Chinese immigrant who helps her parents manage the Calivista Motel in California in 1993. As she navigates the challenges of a new country, Mia spends her days working at the front desk. Mia's parents secretly allow immigrants to stay in empty rooms for free, placing their jobs at risk if the motel owner, Mr. Yao, discovers what they are doing. At the same time, she faces bullying at school and worries about her parents' financial struggles. Through determination, kindness, and a love of writing, Mia finds her voice and begins to stand up for herself and others. The novel highlights themes of immigration, resilience, social justice, and the power of using your voice to create change.

Standards

Common Core State Standards for K–5

Reading: Literature

- Key Ideas and Details
- Craft and Structure
- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Writing

- Text Types and Purposes
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge
- Production and Distribution of Writing

Common Core State Standards for 6–12

Reading: Literature

- Key Ideas and Details
- Craft and Structure
- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Writing

- Text Types and Purposes
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge
- Production and Distribution of Writing

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

- Theme 1: CULTURE
- Theme 2: TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE
- Theme 3: PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENTS
- Theme 4: INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTITY
- Theme 5: INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS, AND INSTITUTIONS
- Theme 6: POWER, AUTHORITY, AND GOVERNANCE
- Theme 7: PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION, AND CONSUMPTION
- Theme 10: CIVIC IDEALS AND PRACTICES

National Core Arts Standards for Visual Arts

- CREATING
- PRESENTING
- RESPONDING
- CONNECTING

National Core Music Standards

- MU: Re7.1.4–6 – Perceive and Analyze Music
- MU: Cn10.1– Connecting Music to History, Culture, and Lived Experience

Social Justice Standards

- Identity
- Diversity
- Justice
- Action

Using a TeachersFirst® Reading Trek to Explore This Book

TeachersFirst Reading Treks create a virtual field trip of resources about a piece of literature or a text using the My Maps feature of Google Maps. To motivate and enrich student reading, teachers and students can reference this visual collection of web resources and images as they relate to the contents of a book.

TeachersFirst has done the hard work for you! Use the activities in this teacher guide and the accompanying Reading Trek map as you and your students explore this book. And if you feel inspired, you (or your students) can create your own Reading Trek about this or another book!

Using This Reading Trek in Class

Below is a list of ideas for using this Reading Trek in your educational setting.

Working with the Map:

1. Introduce the book to the whole class on an interactive whiteboard, using the Reading Trek map to highlight its various layers.
2. Students can use Book Creator (TeachersFirst review) to write a diary entry from Mia's perspective at a specific map location. Entries should include details about her thoughts, challenges, and how that setting influences her actions. Students can add illustrations or images to enhance meaning.
3. Using Padlet (TeachersFirst review), students can respond to the prompt: "How do different places affect Mia's opportunities and choices?" Students post reflections tied to specific map locations and comment on classmates' ideas to build discussion.
4. Have students create a visual comparison of two locations on a map using Google Drawings (TeachersFirst review). They illustrate and label differences in setting, challenges, and character interactions, using text evidence to support their thinking.
5. Conduct a "Map Walk" by placing printed map locations around the room. Students rotate through each station, read short excerpts, and write responses that explain how each setting affects Mia's life, decisions, and relationships.

Extension Activities:

1. Have students create a comic strip using Storyboard That (TeachersFirst review) that shows a key moment from the story and its corresponding map location. Dialogue and visuals should highlight character emotions and conflicts.
2. Using Canva Infographic Maker (TeachersFirst review), students can design an infographic that explains the challenges immigrants face in the novel and how those challenges connect to real-world issues today.
3. Students can build a timeline using Padlet's Timeline template (TeachersFirst review), tracing key events in Mia's journey, connecting each event to a location on the map, and explaining cause-and-effect relationships.
4. Using Adobe Express Video Maker (TeachersFirst review), have students create a short video titled "A Day at the Front Desk," narrating Mia's responsibilities and challenges while connecting scenes to specific map locations.
5. Assign students to write a persuasive letter from Mia's perspective to a community leader that explains the challenges her family faces and proposes solutions. Students should reference specific settings from the map to support their argument.

Helpful Resources

From TeachersFirst:

- TeachersFirst CurriConnects Book List - Maps
- TeachersFirst Review of Google My Maps
- OK2Ask: No Passport Required: Cross-Curricular Learning Journeys with Google My Maps
- OK2Ask: Engage & Inspire with Reading Treks

Other Resources:

- Kelly Yang Website
- Boston University Center for Educating Critically
- Front Desk- Sample Lesson
- Flip- PDF