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Saint Paul Public Library

Read Brave 2021

Community and Educational Curriculum

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For

Saint Paul Public Library and Read Brave
community and school engagement

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January 2021



Book for Ages 9-12: "Front Desk" by Kelly Yang



Contents



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.....	0
Saint Paul Public Library	0
About Read Brave	2
Grade Levels: 4 to 6, Elementary (Readers, Book Clubs, and Literature Groups).....	2
Enduring Understandings.....	2
Book: “ <i>Front Desk</i> ” by <i>Kelly Yang</i>	2
Video Introductions by the Author	2
Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) Benchmarks and Standards 2020	2
English Language Arts (ELA)	2
Grades 4-6	2
Introduction to the Read Brave book	3
About the Author	4
More titles by this author.....	4
Text Pairings for this book.....	5
Other background information resources	5
At-A-Glance Curriculum	6
Book Themes.....	6
Vocabulary	6
Part 1: Curriculum	6
Part 2: Curriculum: Questions for Higher Order Thinking	7
Bibliography	11

About Read Brave

Read Brave Saint Paul is a new twist on the traditional city one-book program.

Rather than a single book, the program revolves around a common theme relevant to our city. All readers — from our youngest children to our elders — are encouraged to engage in the program through reading, discussion, programming, and action. The 2021 Read Brave theme is “*Owning Our Stories: Rising Together for a Better Saint Paul.*”

Grade Levels: 4 to 6, Elementary (Readers, Book Clubs, and Literature Groups)

Ages: Ages 9-12

Only 17% of parents of kids ages 9–11 read aloud to their children. Yet 83% of kid’s ages 6–17 say being read to is something they either loved or liked a lot. ([Scholastic’s “Kids & Family Reading Report™”](#)). [This](#) Read Brave curriculum is designed to be used in grades 4-6 reading book clubs, assigned reading, and choice reading as a guide to higher order thinking (HOT), discernment, and to create curious research-ready scholars and reading-ready community book clubs that seek out knowledge to become lifelong learners via the written text.

Enduring Understandings

Book: “Front Desk” by Kelly Yang

- Readers notice the way a character’s development evolves from beginning to end in a text.
- Readers are able to draw details and evidence from the text to show how a character’s growth leads to clues about the theme.
- Readers notice how the big ideas over the course of the text develop and are refined through the characters and events.

Video Introductions by the Author

- Watch here: <https://youtu.be/--sDoefzSrY>
- Watch here: <https://youtu.be/ayeYJvRJ0Y4>

**Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) Benchmarks and Standards 2020
English Language Arts (ELA)
Grades 4-6**

Anchor Standard (Reading Grade 4)

- **4.1.2.1-R2** Read and comprehend independently, A) both self-selected and teacher-directed texts, B) complex literary and informational texts, and C)
- **4.1.6.1-R6** Analyze influences on content, meaning, and style of text including fact and fiction, time period, and author perspective and identity, including Dakota and Anishinaabe perspective, in complex literary and informational texts.

Anchor Standard (Reading Grade 5)

- **5.1.2.1-R2** Read and comprehend independently, A) both self-selected and teacher-directed texts, B) complex literary and informational texts, and C) from multiple sources representing perspectives identities like and unlike their own from dominant, non-dominant, and marginalized social groups.

Anchor Standard (Reading Grade 6)

- **6.1.4.1-R4** Read critically to comprehend, interpret, and analyze themes and central ideas in complex literary and informational texts.

Benchmark: Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what a text says explicitly and inferences drawn from the text; summarize the text.

- ★ Please review the following [Minnesota English Language Arts Standards Draft #3 August 2020](#) to set pace and sequence for your project for Elementary scholars.



Introduction to the Read Brave book

“Front Desk” by Kelly Yang

“Mia Tang¹ has a lot of secrets.”

Number 1: She lives in a motel, not a big house. Every day, while her immigrant parents clean the rooms, ten-year-old Mia manages the front desk of the Calivista Motel and tends to its guests.

Number 2: Her parents hide immigrants. And if the mean motel owner, Mr. Yao, finds out they've been letting them stay in the empty rooms for free, the Tangs will be doomed.

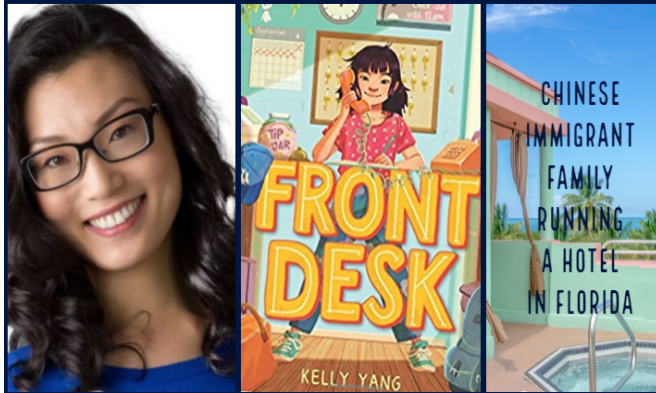
Number 3: She wants to be a writer. But how can she when her mom thinks she should stick to math because English is not her first language?

It will take all of Mia's courage, kindness, and hard work to get through this year. Will she be able to hold on to her job, help the immigrants and guests, escape Mr. Yao, and go for her dreams (Goodreads, 2020)?

“Front Desk is about not living in fear even when you and your family are down on your luck. Keep living - as time moves forward, things change.” ~Kelly Yang (Author)

¹ Main character (daughter) Mia (with Lupe, Hank, Mrs. Yang, Mr. Yang, Mr. Yao, Jason)

About the Author



Kelly Yang is the author of *Front Desk*, which won the 2019 Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature and was chosen a Best Book of the Year by multiple publications, including NPR, the Washington Post, and the New York Public Library. Kelly's family immigrated to the United States from China when she was a young girl, and she grew up in California, in circumstances very similar to those of Mia Tang. She eventually left the motels and went to college at the age of 13, and is a graduate of UC Berkeley and Harvard

Law School. She is the founder of The Kelly Yang Project, a leading writing and debating program for children in Asia and the United States. Her writing has been published in the South China Morning Post, the New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Atlantic. To learn more about her and the *Front Desk* books, visit www.frontdeskthebook.com. (Source: [Scholastic](#))

More titles by this author



Text Pairings for this book

Other Authors and Culture dynamics in the United States

- *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* is a book by Ronald Takaki. It received an Anisfield-Wolf Book Award in 1994.
- *Round is a Mooncake* by Roseanne Tho

“Round is a mooncake, round is the moon, round are the lanterns outside my room,” sings the little heroine of **Round Is A Mooncake** as she explores her urban neighborhood during the Chinese Moon Festival for all things round, square and rectangular. Lovely lyrical picture books with bouncy verse and beautiful bright illustrations by Grace Lin.

- *Bee-Bim Bop!* by Linda Sue Park

In this fast-paced book, a hungry girl helps her mother make **Bee-Bim Bop** (*a traditional Korean rice dish*). In bouncy rhyming text coupled with whimsical illustrations, the story tells of shopping, preparing ingredients, setting the table, and sitting down to enjoy a favorite meal with the family. The book includes Linda Sue’s very own bee-bim bop recipe!

- **Uncle Peter’s Amazing Chinese Wedding** by Lenore Look

The whole family is looking forward to Uncle Peter’s wedding... except Jenny. While everyone is preparing for the traditional Chinese wedding, Jenny worries that she won’t be Uncle Peter’s number one anymore. Maybe she can stop the wedding? Vibrantly illustrated **Uncle Peter’s Amazing Chinese Wedding** is a charming picture book that highlights many traditions of a Chinese wedding, from the tea ceremony to good-luck money and the bride’s many different dresses

Other background information resources

- **Websites Be an Ally: Six Simple Ways** www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/be-an-ally-six-simple-ways
- **Myths and Facts about Immigrants and Immigration** www.adl.org/resources/fact-sheets/myths-and-facts-about-immigrants-and-immigration

At-A-Glance Curriculum

“Front Desk” by Kelly Yang

MLA Citation: Yang, Kelly. *Front Desk*. , 2018. Print.

67 Chapters (short) with Author Notes and Discussion Questions

Book Themes

Asian-American people and culture, Family, Immigration and Anti-immigrant bias, Bullying, Racism, Collective power, acting as an ally.

Vocabulary

Key Words Discuss and define these words with students prior to reading the book and remind them of the meanings as they come up in the book.

- | | | |
|---------------|---------------------|------------------|
| ■ accent | ■ furiously | ■ pride |
| ■ disheveled | ■ medical insurance | ■ typhoon |
| ■ insanity | ■ supply-and-demand | ■ desperate |
| ■ reminisce | ■ awkwardly | ■ humiliation |
| ■ afford | ■ generous | ■ protest |
| ■ empathy | ■ native | ■ urgency |
| ■ interrogate | ■ sympathetic | ■ determination |
| ■ rigged | ■ citizens | ■ immigrants |
| ■ agonize | ■ hierarchy | ■ racist |
| ■ fake | ■ offensive | ■ discriminatory |
| ■ luxurious | ■ temporary | ■ infuriated |
| ■ stereotypes | ■ deposit | ■ reasonable |
| ■ anxious | ■ hospitality | |

Part 1: Curriculum

Book Report Activities 4-6 (elementary/community book club)

Front Desk by Kelly Yang

The book, “*Front Desk*” provides an opportunity for a rich engagement of the text and issues about immigrants and immigration. Here are some suggested activities for 4-6 grade classrooms and community book clubs.

1. Conflicts

Write all the types of conflict that apply to your book and the specific characters or things that were in conflict. Person vs. person/people Person vs. society/most people Person vs. nature Person vs. him/herself.

2. Book Review

Compose a short review and critique offering your overall opinion of the book you read. In an organized paragraph, provide examples and evidence for what you liked or disliked about the book. (Use MLA format for all written pieces.)

3. Original Title and Book Cover

Create a brand-new title for the book you read. Also, design a completely new and appropriate book cover for your book. You may illustrate the most exciting, funny, or emotional part of the book, or make you're drawing more profound by adding thematic or symbolic elements to your cover art.

4. Protagonist/Hero Social Media Page

Identify the main character of the story, who the story is mainly about, or the hero. Create a detailed social media page for the protagonist; including five posts this character would share with his/her friends.

Part 2: Curriculum: Questions for Higher Order Thinking

Extension Activities Below are activities in which you can engage students in order to extend the learning from the book. This book is excellent for Middle School Book Clubs at the educator discretion. (Resources used with permission by the *Anti-Defamation League-2019*)

1. Reader's Response Writing Activities Diary Entry of a Character:

- Have students select one of the main characters (Mia, Lupe, Hank, Mrs. Yang, Mr. Yang, Mr. Yao, Jason) or a secondary character from the book.
- Then have students write journal entries for their chosen character, writing 8–10 entries that the character might have written throughout the events in the book. (As an alternative, have students write 3–4 diary entries instead but with each, include drawings to go along with the entries that capture the characters' mood, thoughts and/or feelings).

(Remind students that for the journal entries, the character's thoughts, feelings and reflections are very important as well as their reaction to the day-to-day events including what happens to other characters as well as themselves. You may choose to have students engage in pre-writing discussions with a partner about their character in order to get some of their ideas fleshed out. After they have completed the assignment, have them share their journal entries with the class and consider creating an online collection of all the journal entries.)

2. Learn about the Author

*Have students read the back pages about **Kelly Yang and her family's immigration story.***

Explain that students will be conducting more research about Kelly Yang that includes a writing project at the end. First, as a class, discuss possible things they want to know about her such as:

- where she grew up
- her inspiration/motivation for writing the book

- her cultural background and its relevance to the book
- other books she has written interests and hobbies, family life, relevant quotes, etc. Their research can include: (1) looking at her website (<https://kellyyang.edu.hk/about-kelly-yang/>),
- The final project could include one of the following ideas: an extended “author bio” that would be on the back of her book, a letter to the author (use her website’s contact page) or a simulated interview between the author and a journalist.

3. Write Your Own *Collective Power Story*

Talk about the end of the book when Mia, along with family members, friends, customers, the “weeklies,” neighboring store owners, people who they let stay with them and others pulled together and collected all the money needed to purchase the motel. Elicit from students that none of them individually would have been able to buy it on their own but together, they were able to raise enough money to purchase it.

Ask students:

- Has anything like that ever happened to you, in small or large ways?
- Have you ever been able to do something as a group that you weren’t able to do by yourself?
- Have you ever heard about something like that happening either in history or in the news?
- Have students explore that concept of collective power with each other and then write an essay that explains what happened.

4. Identity-Based Bullying Talk with students about the role of bullying and how it is addressed in the book

Mia was teased and bullied by several classmates based on aspects of her identity (being Asian, being an immigrant, being poor). Elicit a definition of bullying as follows: *When a person or a group behaves in ways—on purpose and over and over—that make someone feel hurt, afraid or embarrassed.* (**Note:** This definition is for elementary students. For older students, use the definition in our Glossary.)

- Explain that bullying does not mean behavior that happens once; it is behavior that takes place over and over and that is meant to make the target feel badly. Ask students: What is identity? Elicit/explain a definition of identity as the qualities, beliefs and characteristics that make a particular person or group different from others. (You can provide an example using yourself such as “My identity includes being a woman, Muslim and an immigrant.”)
- Explain that identity-based bullying is bullying that is related to the targeted person’s identity such as race, gender, religion, disability, etc. Elicit from students the different times and ways that Mia was teased and bullied in the book. Ask students: Was it identity-based bullying and if so, how?
- Explain that Mia was bullied based on her race, economic status and being an immigrant.

5. Have students talk in pairs or small groups about a time that they witnessed, heard about or personally experienced bullying based on an aspect of identity.

They should share (1) what happened, (2) how they felt and (3) what they or someone else did or what they wish they or someone else did about it. When they are finished talking, ask a few students to share their reflections with the class.

[Note for Culturally Responsive Teaching: Before discussing this topic, it is important to consider that you may have students in your class whose family members or they themselves are immigrants and/or undocumented immigrants. Be prepared and sensitive to those students and be mindful as to how you discuss this in your classroom. Students who may not have shared this previously may disclose it during the lesson and that information should only come from the student themselves.]

6. Engage students in a discussion about immigration.

First, read the “Author’s Note” in the back of the book (starting on page 287) about Kelly Yang’s immigration story as well as some history about immigration from China over the years. Then, ask students the following questions:

- What does it mean to be an immigrant?
- What is immigration?
- Define immigration as the process of coming into a non-native or foreign country to live.

[Note: You can share with students that 40 million people who live in the U.S. were born in another country and that the U.S. has more immigrants than any other country in the world. Read additional stories about immigration aloud (as suggested below) and find out what students know and don’t know about immigration. You can also provide information about undocumented immigrants, sharing that people who are “undocumented” are foreign-born people who come to the U.S. without the legal papers to do so and who often have fled their home countries because of extreme poverty, danger or wanting to be with their families in the U.S. Some enter the country legally as tourists, students or temporary workers and become undocumented when their papers expire. Many have lived in the U.S. for a long time, have families here and feel like citizens.]

Also, explain that about 11 million undocumented immigrants live in the United States, which has been a stable number for the past five years. After this discussion, you can have older students do a research project, investigating one country in particular with large groups of immigrants who have come to the U.S. (e.g., China, Mexico, India, Philippines, El Salvador, etc.).

Should Do

- Middle school scholars should do their research on this book culminating in a project (*Google Slides, Spoken Word presentation, timeline with photos/drawings, or a picture book that can*

be read to younger children) and should explore background information about the country, why people are immigrating to the U.S., what they left behind and what life is like for them here.

- In order to foster empathy, you can encourage them to also find stories they find in the news that profile people with an explanation of their situations. (This book is ideal for Social Studies curriculum on immigration and Asian Americans.)
- Teachers and community book clubs can assign personal narrative essays for schools with diverse populations to tell their personal stories in a meaningful way.
- Also, any art work or spoken word presentations should be presented in a Gallery Walk format for other students and teachers to view.
- Lesson closure is based on discussions, essays, and student facing activities that check for understanding and mastery of the subject matter.

6. AVID “Other” Activity

- Students will read the first three (3) chapters of Front Desk, then download and answer the questions about “The Other.”
- Link to your worksheet copy:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/13wPEcoq7tizO7DiNYWIs9SGQfZZuWoliV26kloBbczw/edit?usp=copy>

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