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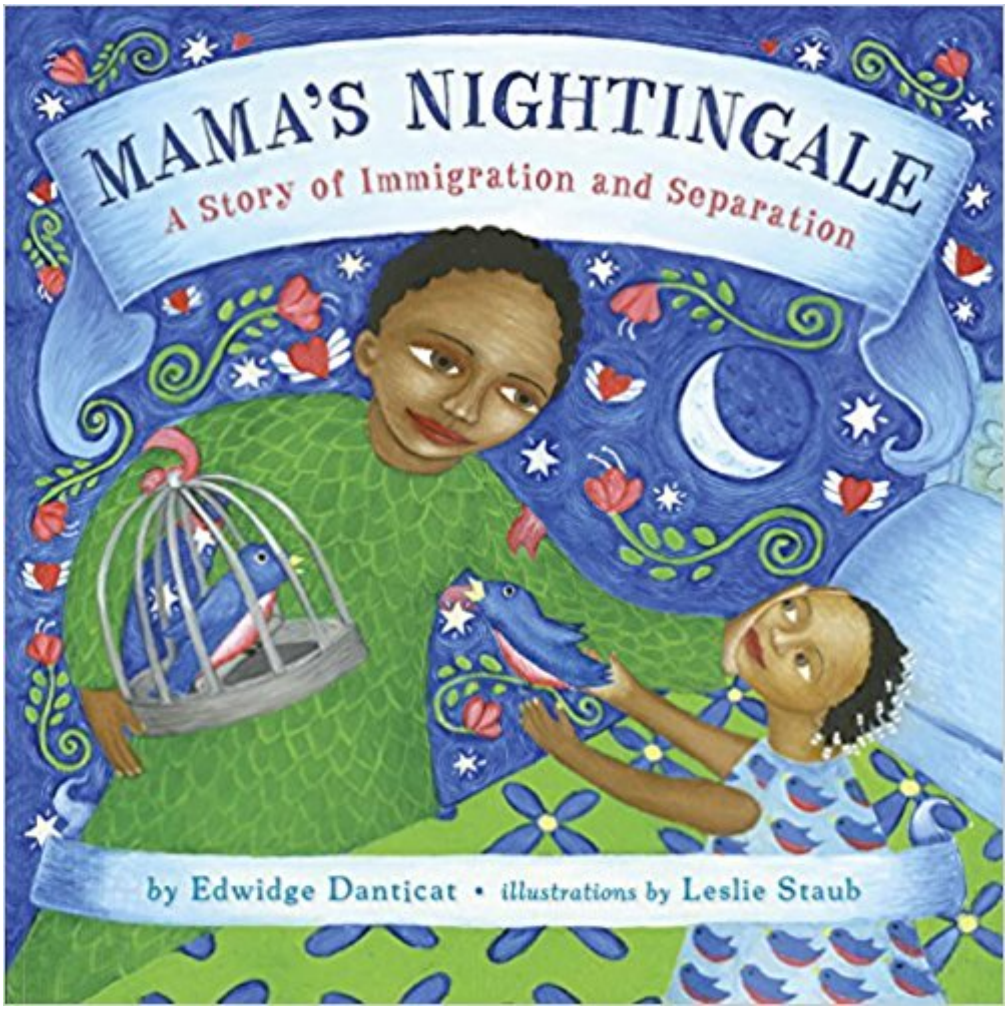
Mama's Nightingale: A Story Of Immigration And Separation



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Synopsis

A touching tale of parent-child separation and immigration, from a National Book Award finalistAfter Saya's mother is sent to an immigration detention center, Saya finds comfort in listening to her mother's warm greeting on their answering machine. To ease the distance between them while sheâ ™s in jail, Mama begins sending Saya bedtime stories inspired by Haitian folklore on cassette tape. Moved by her mother's tales and her father's attempts to reunite their family, Saya writes a story of her ownâ "one that just might bring her mother home for good.With stirring illustrations, this tender tale shows the human side of immigration and imprisonmentâ "and shows how every child has the power to make a difference.

Book Information

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Hardcover: 32 pages
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Language: English
ISBN-10: 0525428097
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Product Dimensions: 10.2 x 0.4 x 10.3 inches
Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)
Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 10 customer reviews
Best Sellers Rank: #42,181 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #57 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Multicultural Stories > Hispanic & Latino #102 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Fiction #188 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Parents
Age Range: 5 - 8 years
Grade Level: Kindergarten - 3

Customer Reviews

Gr 2â "5â "Brightly colored folk art with a Caribbean flair offsets the sadness of a little girl whose Haitian mother has been sent away to a prison for undocumented immigrants. Every night, Saya's father writes letters to the judges, their mayor and congresswoman, and newspapers and television stations, but no one ever writes back. During their weekly visits to the detention center, Saya's mother tells her stories of the wosiyÃ l, or nightingale. Soon, Saya begins to receive cassette tapes in the mail from her mother and finds hope and solace in the stories Mama has recorded for her.

One night, amid a great deal of sadness and frustration, Saya writes a story of her own to ease the sadness. When Papa sends her letter to a newspaper reporter, everything changes, and Saya learns the incredible power of words and stories. Danticat, who was born in Haiti, was separated from her parents until she was 12 years old and beautifully conveys a story about loss and grief and hope and joy. Staub’s oil paintings are eye-catching and will hold the interest of young readers. VERDICT This richly illustrated picture book is a first purchase, especially in communities with a large immigrant population.â ”Jennifer Steib Simmons, Anderson County Library, SC

Now a Kirkus Best Books of 2015!"Skillfully written with Creole words sprinkled into the English, Mamaâ ™s Nightingale is richly illuminated by Leslie Staubâ ™s oil paintings evoking Haitian folk art.â •â ”The New York Times* "A must-read both for children who live this life of forced separation and those who don’t."â ”Kirkus Reviews, starred review* "[Danticat] beautifully conveys a story about loss and grief and hope and joy."â ”School Library Journal, starred review"A serious yet hopeful story...readers similarly separated from a loved one may well find solace in Danticatâ ™s honest storytelling."â ”Publishers Weekly"Children of parents who are being detained will beÂ comforted by knowing they are not the only ones facing this challenge and mightÂ even be inspired to take action the way Saya does."â ”The Horn Book"Danticatâ ™s immigration story is compelling...The inclusion of Haitian phrases adds to theÂ personal nature of the story, whose happy ending is deserved by all."â ”Booklist

These books were not only interesting in their bilingual form, but they were so beautifully illustrated. Truly to be appreciated by th echildren and great o use in English classes with the younger kids. I loved all of them.

This is a beautiful story. It helps adults and children understand & feel the pain that comes with a family being torn apart. A pain being inflicted on too many families.

Spectacular, raw piece of critical literature! This book brought out amazing conversation in our classroom.

Book is new and still wrapped in cellophane. Was purchased to give to the students at an elementary school.

Great read.

Summary: SayaÃ¢Â Â™s mother, an immigrant from Haiti, is in jail for not having the right papers. Saya and her father visit her mother every week, but itÃ¢Â Â™s not the same as having her mother at home. SayaÃ¢Â Â™s father writes letters every evening, contacting politicians and reporters to try to get help. One evening, Saya decides to write her own story. Her father sends it to a newspaper, and a few days later, a reporter comes to interview them. As a result of the story in the paper, SayaÃ¢Â Â™s mother gets to see a judge who allows her to go home while she waits for her papers to come through. In the authorÃ¢Â Â™s note, Edwidge Danticat tells the story of how she and her parents were separated by immigration until she was twelve years old. Grades K-3.Pros: Kids will be fascinated by SayaÃ¢Â Â™s story and inspired by the way she helps her mom. The illustrations are beautiful, with bold colors and symbols from MamaÃ¢Â Â™s stories woven into the pictures of the family.Cons: Expect a lot of questions about what is going on with this family from readers unfamiliar with immigration laws.

This book, best for ages 5-8, tells the story of a Haitian, immigrant family in the U.S. and a young girl who, amidst pain and separation, finds solace in her motherÃ¢Â Â™s tales. As the protagonist overcomes some difficult challenges, she also learns to recognize the power of her own words.The story centers on Saya, who is struggling with the separation from her mother, who has just been sent to Ã¢Â Âœ Sunshine CorrectionalÃ¢Â Â• for not having Ã¢Â Âœthe right papersÃ¢Â Â•. The name of the prison where SayaÃ¢Â Â™s mom is being held reflects the practice of sugar-coating the real traumas that immigration laws and the separation of families inflict. In DanticatÃ¢Â Â™s AuthorÃ¢Â Â™s Note at the back of the book, she explains how this story is largely inspired by her own experiences as a child in Haiti dealing with the trauma of separation from her parents who moved to the U.S. Her parents tried to send for her and her brother, but could never succeed for they lacked Ã¢Â Âœthe right papersÃ¢Â Â•. Danticat explains that she was always fascinated by Ã¢Â Âœthe idea of having the right papersÃ¢Â Â• and how this abstract platitude weighed on many of her childhood memories: Ã¢Â Âœ As children in Haiti, my brother and I sometimes played writing games, making up passports, visas, and other documents that might one day reunite us with our parents.Ã¢Â Â• Additionally, Danticat writes, Ã¢Â Âœ According to the Unites StatesÃ¢Â Â™ Enforcement (ICE), the people Saya refers to as the immigration police, over 70,000 parents of American-born children have been jailed and deported in recent years. This book is dedicated to those children, who, like Saya, are dreaming of the day when their mother, or father, or both

parents, will come home.Ã¢Â Â• Danticat recreates her own childhood memories while infusing the story with elements of action, hope and change.The story begins with Saya listening to her motherÃ¢Â Â™s voice on the answering machine late at night. Mama is not at home and Saya listens to the answering machine when she misses her mother. The voice says in Haitian Creole, Ã¢Â ÂœPlease, leave us good news!Ã¢Â Â•: Ã¢Â ÂœTampri kite bon ti nouvÃ¨l pou nou!Ã¢Â Â• MamaÃ¢Â Â™s voice foreshadows the hopeful charge of the story and the goal of Ã¢Â Âœgood newsÃ¢Â Â• that drives the protagonistÃ¢Â Â™s actions.Saya and Papa go to visit Mama in prison and Saya is overwhelmed by sadness upon seeing her mother. In the short time they have together, Mama tells Saya traditional Haitian stories about the wosiyÃ l, Ã¢Â Âœa beautiful nightingale who loves the taste of a sweet cottony fruit called a soursopÃ¢Â Â•: Ã¢Â ÂœMama leans over and hums the wosiyÃ lÃ¢Â Â™s song in my ear. The melody is as soft as MamaÃ¢Â Â™s touch and as sweet as a real soursopÃ¢Â Â•. WosiyÃ l is also MamaÃ¢Â Â™s nickname for Saya, as she too loves the taste of the soursop fruit.This reference to the tales of the wosiyÃ l, coupled with StaubÃ¢Â Â™s evocative illustrations, presents the songbird as a symbol of freedom. Throughout the book there are also illustrations of birds perched on the interior windowsill of MamaÃ¢Â Â™s jail cell, and caged songbirds in the decorative margins of the text, which represent, as readers may surmise, a lack of freedom. During SayaÃ¢Â Â™s visit with Mama, Mama gives her a package with cassette tapes of her Ã¢Â Âœwind-chime voice singing about the soursop and the nightingaleÃ¢Â Â• so that Saya can listen to her motherÃ¢Â Â™s voice before bed. When Saya puts the cassette tape in she listens to MamaÃ¢Â Â™s songs and an additional tale that Mama made up herself. In an illustration to match, Staub paints Mama as a beautiful spirit coming to visit Saya at night, with songbirds, hearts, stars and flowers swirling around her in a dream-like flurry. However, Mama is also shown with a rope strung across her arm, and two caged birds tied to either end. This symbolizes the shackles that have been placed on Mama in real life, despite the temporary reprieve of SayaÃ¢Â Â™s dream.For access to the full review and additional resources, check out our Vamos a Leer blog at teachinglatinamericathroughliterature.com

MamaÃ¢Â Â™s Nightingale tells a serious but hopeful story about Saya, who is separated from her mother. Stirring illustrations and a tender tale show the human side of immigration in this picture book by Edwidge Danticat, who herself grew up in a family that was separated for years by immigration. DanticatÃ¢Â Â™s book is dedicated to those young people like her main character, Saya, who are dreaming of the day when their family will be reunited.For Saya, the reason for her mother not being home is that she doesnÃ¢Â Â™t have the right papers to stay in the United States

and so she is being held in an immigration detention center. Every night, SayaÃ¢Â Â™s father writes to the mayor and to other politicians, as well as to judges and to reporters about their situation. No one ever replies. Every time, Saya and her father visit the detention center, the question arises as to when her mother can come home. No one has any idea. After one particularly emotional visit, SayaÃ¢Â Â™s mother begins to mail tapes with stories she reads or makes up for Saya to hear. In response, Saya writes her own story. Her story changes the familyÃ¢Â Â™s future.On the serious side, through her honest storytelling, Danticat provides real faces to the debate over immigration. While SayaÃ¢Â Â™s story is fictional, it is inspired by real events. The author herself and her brother were separated from their parents for most of their childhood due to not having the right papers. She is not alone in her experience. According to the United StatesÃ¢Â Â™ Department of Homeland SecurityÃ¢Â Â™s Immigration and Customs Enforcement, over 70,000 parents of American-born children have been jailed and deported. In MamaÃ¢Â Â™s Nightingale, Dantica has painted a poignant portrait of the difficult situation in which immigrant families often find themselves and given them a voice.On the hopeful side, Saya finds comfort in the bedtime stories her mother records on cassette tapes and sends her. Saya and her father even listen to them together. In addition, her father faithfully cares for her, offers her advice, and tucks her in at night. Although his sadness is readily apparent, he never allows it to hinder him from his important role as a parent to Saya. When Saya responds to her mother with her own story, she also discovers the power of words. Readers will appreciate reading of how SayaÃ¢Â Â™s story results in her mother being released. Finally, artist Leslie Staub tempers the upsetting circumstances with bright of colors and whimsical objects from the stories SayaÃ¢Â Â™s mother tells.MamaÃ¢Â Â™s Nightingale is a powerful story. Young people in a similar situation will take comfort in SayaÃ¢Â Â™s story. For those young people not impacted by immigration, MamaÃ¢Â Â™s Nightingale makes a great discussion starting point. So many questions can be addressed such as: What are the right papers? Why doesnÃ¢Â Â™t SayaÃ¢Â Â™s mom have them? How can the proper papers be obtained? Why do immigrants need papers in the first place? MamaÃ¢Â Â™s Nightingale is a tale that will make a difference in everyone who reads it.

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