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*Other Words for Home*  
Jasmine Warga

*Efrén Divided*  
Ernesto Cisneros

*Everything Sad Is Untrue*  
Daniel Nayeri

*Pie in the Sky*  
Remy Lai

*From the Desk of Zoe Washington*  
Janae Marks

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# Discussion Guide for Youth

*Front Desk* by Kelly Yang



## From The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books Reviews

Reminiscent of the television series *Fresh Off the Boat*, this title is an honest account of the ups and downs of immigrant life in America in the early 1990s, here told from a child's perspective.

Basing the story on her own childhood experiences, Yang writes Mia's dreams into reality without sacrificing or minimizing the heartbreaking realities of many immigrants' hardships.

Resilient Mia stumbles over and over again, but she satisfyingly picks herself right back up, often with the help of her parents, Calivista family, and friends. The question of whether Mia will win the essay contest is a big one, but whether or not the answer is yes, there is much satisfaction in this book's powerful and heart-wrenching close.

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## Discussion Topics

1. Before Mia arrives at Dale Elementary School, she has gone to four different schools for five different grades. Have you ever had to move schools? What was it like? What must it have been like for Mia to move so much?
2. One of the customers at the motel doesn't want to listen to Mia, because she's a kid. Has that ever happened to you before, where an adult didn't want to listen to you or believe you, because you were a kid?
3. When Lupe and Mia first meet, they're not entirely honest with one another. What does that do to a friendship? Why are they so happy and become better friends when they do become honest?
4. Mia's mom says that "We're immigrants. . . . Our lives are never fair." What are some of the ways that statement is proven true in the book?
5. Racism and prejudice can come in many different forms. Can you give an example in the story of a racist/ prejudiced action or statement? Can you give an example of a racist/prejudiced action or statement that might not be as obvious, but is still harmful all the same?
6. Mia often thinks about how it's every person for themselves in America and that relationships revolve around money. What are some examples in the story that back up this thinking? What are some examples that say otherwise? How do Mia's feelings on the matter evolve?
7. In the Author's Note, Kelly Yang describes her personal connection to Mia's story and the real history behind it. How does reading this note change and/or add to your reading experience of the novel?

EXCERPTED FROM PARENT/FAMILY DISCUSSION GUIDE FROM ADL EDUCATION

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## Seeing Yourself in Books by Kelly Yang



When I was a kid, books were my only friends. My parents were first-generation struggling immigrants in the United States. I moved to eight different schools for eight different grades. I was always the new girl. Not only was I the new girl, but I was harboring a secret. My parents and I lived in a motel and every day, while my parents cleaned the rooms, I manned the front desk.

I remember being filled with anxiety whenever any of my classmates talked about what their parents did. This choking, painful anxiety as I squeezed my eyes shut and hoped they wouldn't ask me what mine did. Or where I lived. To cope, I buried my nose in books, but even there, I felt not normal. I remember read books like *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* and thinking, God, I wish I had those problems.

Instead, I had problems like: Did #3 check out? Is the key still in the room? Are we going to have enough food to eat tonight? These were very real concerns of mine growing up, and I couldn't find them anywhere in the books I was reading. And when you don't see yourself or your problems in the books you're reading, you start to feel invisible, which is why, 23 years later, I am so proud to be a part of changing that. To me, diverse books are our ticket to a brighter future. When children see themselves represented in a book—that magical moment when their eyes light up and they realize, someone else gets what I'm going through—it's the most empowering feeling ever and it changes lives.

Sincerely, Kelly Yang

PHOTO AND TEXT FROM FRONT DESK THE BOOK WEBSITE

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