

*Front Desk*  
**Discussion Guide**  
Grades 5-7

**Before Reading: to activate schema, build background knowledge, and set a purpose.**

- What is privilege? What are the dangers of making judgments about people based on race, gender, age, sexuality, etc., rather than understanding that every person is different and influenced by a unique combination of factors?
- Frontload vocabulary: Chapter 1-7 (see vocabulary list)

**Before using this book with your class or recommending the book to students we suggest reading the book closely to determine if it is a good fit. Consider saying to your students:**

**“This book contains topics and language that may be sensitive. Not all books fit all readers. If you are uncomfortable with this book, you have the right to stop reading it, but please pick another.”**

**During Reading: to engage students, check for understanding, and make connections.**

- When Mr. Yao said, “he speaks native English,” how do you think Mia feels? Mia had transferred to four schools. Have you had to move and change school? What does it feel like? (Ch. 1-3)
- Why did the principal talk to Mia as if she didn’t understand English? What were the perceptions the principal may have? If you feel comfortable, you can share your own experiences about the perceptions other people had of you. (Ch. 4)
- What do you think about the mistake Mia made? Do you think it’s reasonable? What would you do if you were Mia? (Ch. 5-7)
- When you witness a bully, how would you react to the situation? What is the most efficient way to prevent bullying? (Ch. 8)
- How did Mr. Yao react to the broken washing machine? What was Mia’s parents’ solution? (Ch. 9)
- Mia and Lupe are not being honest with each other. What does that do to the friendship? Ch. 10-11)
- Mia came up with an idea to protect the motel. Share your ideas to protect the hotel. (Ch. 12-13)
- Do you agree or disagree with Mia’s statement, “poor people can do stuff too!”. Why and why not. What is the presumption Jason might have? (Ch. 14)
- Why did Mia put her favorite snack back on the store shelf? (Ch. 15-16)
- Why did Mia and Lupe both lie about themselves? Do you agree with the good and bad rollercoasters theory? (Ch. 17-18)
- Mia’s mom’s expectation was different from what Mia wanted. Do you think Mia should give up what she likes? Why and Why not? What is the best way to respond to different expectations from your significant others? (Ch. 19-20)
- Why do you think Mr. Yao and the policemen suspect Hank and Mrs. Robinson? Do you agree with their behaviors and beliefs? (Ch. 21)

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- Why did Jason ask Mia to meet him at the auditorium during recess? (Ch. 22)
- Why did Hank get fired? Do you think it is fair? Give your reasons (Ch. 23-24)
- Lupe is passionate about drawing trees. What do you have passion for? Share them with your classmates (Ch. 26).
- Why did Mia constantly doubt herself? How would you help her? What are the doubts you have for yourself? Do you think your suggestion for Mia can work for you? (Ch. 27)
- Why did Mia go to Mrs. T? What was she writing for? What is the jar for? What is a thesaurus? Why were Jason and his friends making fun of Mia? (Ch. 28-29)
- What are the purposes and audiences of writing for Mia? What are the other purposes you can think of? Share with the class. (Ch. 30-31)
- Mia's classmates said to her, "You're Chinese! You're supposed to be good at math!" How are statement like these hurtful to groups of people? (Ch. 32-33)
- Why did Uncle Fung get fired? What culture shock have you experienced? what is the culture shock people may experience in the US? (Ch. 34-36)
- What is a maquiladora? How is the game, hot seat, relevant to maquiladoras? (Ch. 37)
- Why did Mrs. Douglas think Jason was the owner of the pencil? Do you think it is fair? What would you do to make a fair judgment? (Ch. 38-40)
- Why was Mia staying up all night drawing a tree? Share your experience of showing your appreciation to someone you deeply care. (Ch. 41-42)
- What is a reference letter? Do you agree with Mia's approach of helping Hank to get a new job? Why or why not (Ch. 43-44)
- How did Mia get a new pair of jeans? Would you keep the jean or return them to their owner? (Ch. 45-46)
- So far, Mia has written several letters to help people. What does the author trying to tell us? (Ch. 47-48)
- What does it mean by "free" referring to America? How do you interpret "free" to you? (Ch. 49-50)
- Why did Mia send out her letters to many stores? What can you do to fight against racism? (Ch. 51)
- If you were Mia, what would you do to get the money for the essay contest? (Ch. 52-53)
- Do you think it is appropriate for Jason to do mean things to the substitute teacher? Why and why not? (Ch. 54)
- When Mia lost the contest, people around her were trying to cheer her up. Do you have similar experiences? What would you do to comfort your friends who are dismayed? (Ch. 55-58)

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- Why did Mia feel guilty? How would you react to Shen's letter if you were Mia? (Ch. 59-61)
- Do you think Mia's Aunts decision is understandable? Discuss from both perspectives. (Ch. 62-64)
- What do you think may happen if Mia's dad really borrows money from a loan shark? (Ch 65)

**After Reading: to summarize, question, and reflect.**

- What efforts has Mia made to achieve her dream? Why did other people help her?
- How did Mia react to bullying and racism? What would you do?
- This story contains many racial and prejudiced biases and perspectives. What is the danger of those beliefs and perspectives?

**If your students enjoyed this book...**

- Extend the conversation by conducting an interview with their family or friend who immigrated to their country.
- Extend the significant topics in the books, such as prejudice, racism, and immigrants into a research project. Using multiliteracy as a medium to integrate more perspectives throughout history and contemporary social contexts.
- Encourage them to continue to discuss it and refer to it in other lessons and conversations.
- Let them explore more about the topic by reading other books with similar themes, structure, characters, or content.