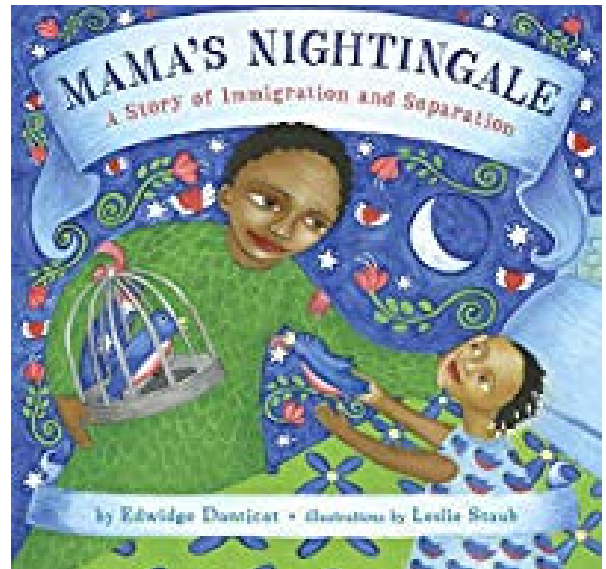




MAMA'S NIGHTINGALE

EDWIDGE DANTICAT

Saya's mother is in prison for being in this country without the proper paperwork. Saya misses her mother very much, even though she gets to visit her every week. Saya's father writes letters to all the newspapers and television stations, but no one responds until Saya writes a letter. Can her words bring her mother home?



Questions:

1. How would you feel if your mom had to go away for a long time? Why do you think the girl listens to the message her mom left over and over again? How do you think she feels when she accidentally erases the message?
2. Why is her mom in prison? Should people be separated from their families like that?
3. Why does her father spend so much time writing letters? Who does he write to? Why do you think they don't write back?
4. How do you think she feels when she gets to see her mom every week? How do you think she feels when her mom hums the nightingale song?
5. Why do you think the girl kicks and screams when it's time to go? Why is her mother crying? When the guard tells his father not to bring her back until she can behave herself, is he showing empathy for their situation?
6. How do you think Saya feels when she gets a tape from her mom with a bedtime story on it? How does she feel when she listens to it?
7. Do you like both happy stories and sad stories? Do you think she likes all the different stories? Why?
8. Why does Saya want to write a letter? Does someone answer her letter?
9. When people read Saya's story in the newspaper and see her on T.V., how do you think it makes them feel?
10. How does Saya feel when the judge says that her mom can come home with her and her Papa to stay? Why does she give the judge a hug?
11. Who in this story has empathy? Who does not have empathy?

AUTHOR'S NOTE: How do you think the author felt growing up that far away from her parents? How would you feel? How do you think all of the children in our country who are without one or both of their parents feel?