

READ Module Title: “Front Desk”

Book Summary

“Front Desk” by Kelly Yang tells the story of Mia Tang, a fifth-grade girl who moved to the United States from China with her parents. Mia’s family struggles with poverty and discrimination as they manage a motel in Anaheim, Calif., in the 1990s. “Front Desk” is based on the true story of the author’s childhood. Themes include immigration, racism, bullying, family and the power of advocacy.

About This Module	
Overview	Youth will read “Front Desk” by Kelly Yang and will engage with the text through independent reading, reader’s theater and reflection. Because Mia and the weeklies love Monopoly, youth will create and play board games that reflect the story. In honor of Mia’s advocacy through letter writing, they will write letters addressing issues that matter to them.
Guiding Questions*	What aspects of Mia’s family life does she hesitate to share with others? Why? How does Mia advocate for important causes by writing letters?
Culminating Project	Youth will create two products – a board game that incorporates elements of “Front Desk” and an advocacy letter about a topic they feel passionate about.
Session 1	Meet Mia Tang Youth will read Chapter 1 of “Front Desk,” connect Mia’s life to some of their own experiences and work in teams to complete a crossword puzzle based on the first chapter.
Session 2	Secrets and Lies Youth will read about and act out Mia’s first day of school and then discuss the passage.
Session 3	Create a Board Game Youth will create their own board games, which will be played by their peers in the next session. When possible, they’ll connect elements of “Front Desk” to the game.
Session 4	Game Time! Youth will add any final touches to their board games, and then they will play one another’s games.
Session 5	Writing Letters Youth will read and discuss some of the letters Mia writes to advocate for herself, her family or her friends. Then youth will write and send a letter speaking up about something that matters to them.

*Guiding questions are not specifically asked in the sessions themselves, but are meant to guide your preparation and facilitation of the unit. Keep these questions top of mind so you can help youth make connections and capture key takeaways relating to the topic.

Key Terms	
Word	Definition
Protagonist	The leading character in a story
Advocate	A person who recommends or supports a cause, policy, person or community

Supplies		
Facilitator Needs	1	Computer or tablet
	1	Whiteboard or chart paper
	2	Simple prizes (optional)
Each Team Needs	1	Set of markers, crayons or colored pencils
	1	Large sheet of paper, poster board or cardboard
	1	Die and/or stack of notecards
	1	Envelope, plastic bag or box to store game
Each Participant Needs	1	Copy of “Front Desk” by Kelly Yang
	1	Pencil, marker or pen
	1	Sheet of lined paper, envelope and stamp

Literacy Strategies

During this module, readers will...

- Read Aloud
- Make Predictions
- Make Connections Between the Text and Their Own Lives
- Use Critical Thinking Skills
- Provide Textual Evidence for an Argument

Extension Books

If your Club or Youth Center wants to explore other books on this topic, we recommend:

- “Inside Out and Back Again” by Thanhha Lai
- “Other Words for Home” by Jasmine Warga
- “Refugee” by Alan Gratz

Notes to Facilitator

Be aware that when discussing families, some youth will experience stressful thoughts when considering their families. This is especially true under circumstances where they have been in foster care or other situations where they are no longer living with their birth parents. You may want to have a private discussion before the session to prepare anyone you feel might need some time to process and define who they want to consider as their family. When discussing families, let youth know they can consider their family of origin or the people in the home where they currently live to be their family. They can define family in any way that is comfortable and authentic for themselves.

Kelly Yang created discussion guides and support for facilitators reading this book with youth. She also published videos in which she answers questions for readers. Find those resources here: frontdeskthebook.com/for-teachers

To further extend the concepts covered in this book, you could interview immigrants about their experiences with immigration, host a screening of a movie about immigration and hold a discussion, visit a museum with an exhibit on immigration, or join a local advocacy effort.

Summer Brain Gain activities are designed to be safe and fun with a staff-to-youth ratio of 1:10-15. That means at least one staff member per 10-15 youth. Summer Brain Gain can be run with large groups of young people as long as adequate staffing is available. BGCA recommends that staff-to-youth ratios should not exceed 1:25 for any type of activity.

If you have not yet run Module 1: Group Agreements, consider making that the first week of your Summer Brain Gain programming. Group Agreements provide a sense of structure and standards of behavior among participating members of the group. This helps to create emotional safety. For more information about how to make a Group Agreement, see the Group Agreements/Positive Club Climate resources at BGCA.net/ClubClimate. An opportunity to revisit and reflect upon the Group Agreements is included in every Summer Brain Gain session.

The YDToolbox app provides immediate access to tips and activities for creating a high-quality Club experience. Look here for alternative community builders, reflection activities or groupers (quick, inclusive ways to divide a large group into smaller groups or teams). Download the free app from the Apple Store or Google Play, or access online at ydtoolbox.goodbarber.com.