

# Reading <sup>with</sup> Relevance

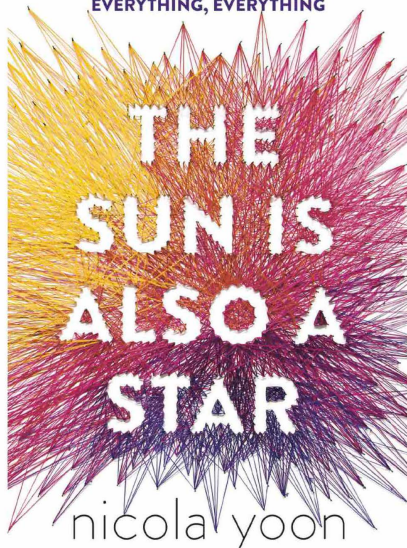
Building INDEPENDENT READERS and THINKERS

A TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR

*The Sun is Also a Star*

A novel by Nicola Yoon

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF  
EVERYTHING, EVERYTHING



Recommended for:  
Grade Levels  
9th-12th



# A tool to inspire change

This literacy curriculum is constructed around a content-rich novel that builds students' literacy skills and supports their character development and self-confidence. Students are motivated to read because they relate to the strong, diverse, and resilient characters featured in our selected novels and because each session gives them the opportunity to connect what they've read to their own lives.

Developed, field-tested, and refined in our own tutoring and mentoring programs, this Common Core Standards curriculum has inspired persistently low-performing students to engage with literature, make meaning in their lives, and improve their English language arts skills. Now, *Reading with Relevance* is available to help you dig deep into the social, emotional, and academic needs of your students, whether in your classroom, after-school program, or youth development agency!



## Why *The Sun is Also a Star?*

Told through the perspectives of two teenagers in America, *The Sun is Also a Star* explores the real struggles young people face — from developing a crush, to dealing with parental relationships and expectations, to considering the meaning of love and life, and finally, coping with the pressures of racism, immigration, and identity. We chose this book for its careful exploration of timely social and emotional themes: love, loss, fate, family, culture, immigration, and the “American Dream.” This curriculum will inspire students to build connections between the characters and their own lives, pushing them to think about their own role in America and the universe.

### This teacher's guide includes:

- A facilitator's guide with tips and resources for implementing the curriculum.
- A map of Common Core Standards addressed through this program.
- Fourteen individual lesson plans, including vocabulary, discussion questions, journal prompts, extension activities, and all handouts.
- Two assessments to monitor student progress throughout the program.
- Regular checkpoints to help teachers assess their students' progress on ELA standards.
- A culminating essay-writing unit.
- An appendix with additional teaching resources and activities to continue exploring this novel.

# Session 1

Pages 1-26



**barrage** (pg. 2): n., a large, consistent attack

**futile** (pg. 3): adj., pointless

**impotence** (pg. 3): n., an inability to achieve or do something

**inveterate** (pg. 6): adj., unlikely to change

**abject** (pg. 7): adj., utterly hopeless, miserable, humiliating, or wretched

**scrutinizes** (pg. 9): v., closely studies or inspects

**artifacts** (pg. 10): n., objects made by human beings, typically of cultural or historical interest

**dire** (pg. 19): adj., extremely serious, potentially disastrous

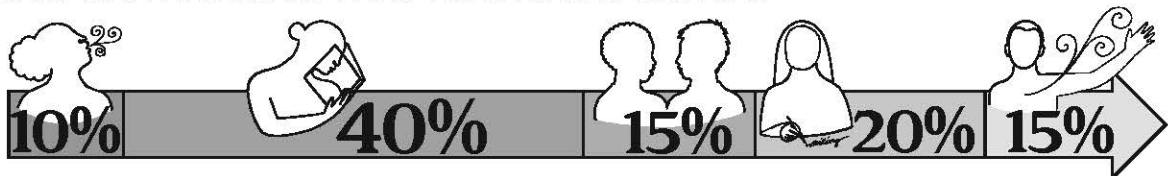
## Today's Theme

Today's theme is **immigration**. In today's reading, students meet our two protagonists, both of whom come from immigrant families. Despite this commonality, the two live amid very different circumstances and pressures. Immigration is a relevant and timely topic: many of your students may be from families who immigrated to the United States, and all of them will come to the novel with existing ideas about immigration in American society. Remind your students that with the exception of Native American families and people whose ancestors were brought over as slaves, the United States is a nation of immigrants. Yet in today's political discourse, immigration has become highly politicized, and immigrants are often villainized. How has immigration influenced our national history? Encourage your students to think empathetically and to try to put themselves in the shoes of someone who might choose — or be forced by circumstance — to immigrate to a new nation. How might this feel? What might people hope to experience by coming to the United States?

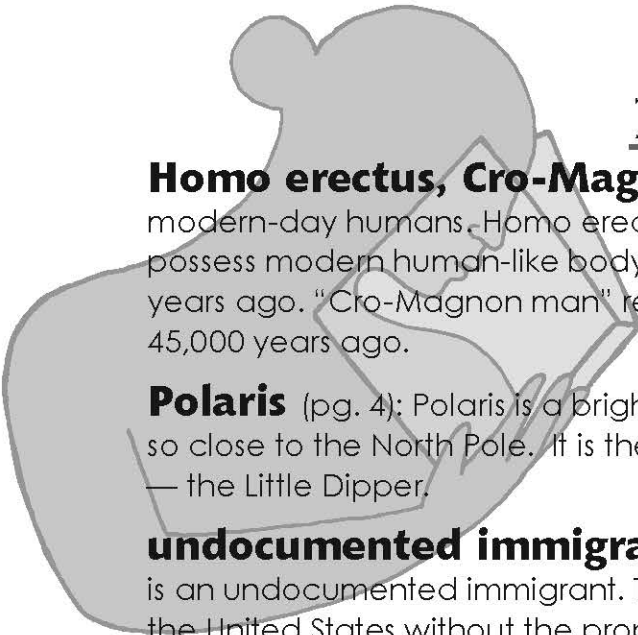
## Vocabulary

## Story Setup

*The Sun is Also a Star* is a young adult novel that covers a single day in the lives of Daniel and Natasha, two teens who meet by accident on the streets of New York and form a striking connection. The novel uses a "shifting narrative" perspective — weaving together the voices and stories of our two protagonists with a number of "minor" characters in order to explore larger questions about the nature of the universe, love, and fate.



## During Reading



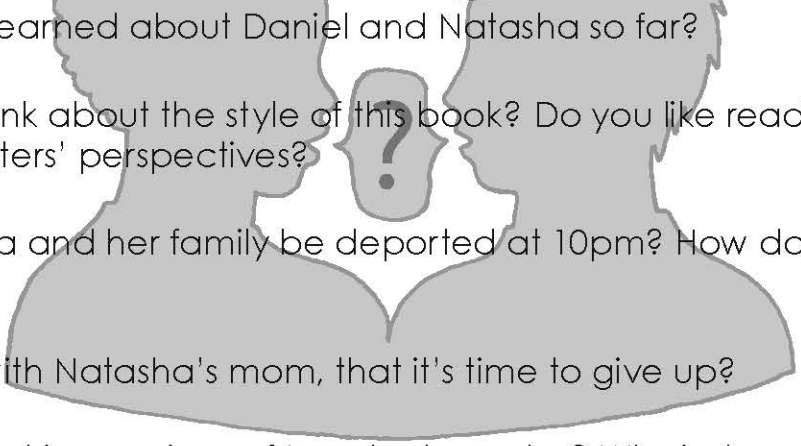
**Homo erectus, Cro-Magnon man** (pg. 1): both ancestors of modern-day humans. Homo erectus are the oldest known early humans to possess modern human-like body proportions and lived 1.89 million to 143,000 years ago. "Cro-Magnon man" refers to human ancestors that lived 43,000-45,000 years ago.

**Polaris** (pg. 4): Polaris is a bright star also known as the North Star, since it is so close to the North Pole. It is the brightest star in the constellation Ursa Minor — the Little Dipper.

**undocumented immigrants:** In this reading, we learn that Natasha is an undocumented immigrant. This means that she and her family came to the United States without the proper paperwork to allow them to stay legally in the United States long term.

**etymological** (pg. 24): related to the origin or history of words and their meaning

## Discussion Questions

- 
- What have we learned about Daniel and Natasha so far?
  - What do you think about the style of this book? Do you like reading from multiple characters' perspectives?
  - Why will Natasha and her family be deported at 10pm? How do you feel about this?
  - Do you agree with Natasha's mom, that it's time to give up?
  - What are your first impressions of Irene's character? Why is she so "desperate"?
  - How did six-year-old Daniel feel about how he was treated by his brother? How do you think Charlie was feeling in this moment?
  - According to the book, how is being an immigrant an "act of faith"?
  - What is Jamaica like in Mr. Barnes' mind? How does this contrast with Natasha's memories and feelings?
  - How does the word "irie" show us language is slippery?

# Journal Prompt

## LONELINESS

- The characters we have met so far in the book are struggling with feeling alone and hopeless. Natasha even says towards the end of the session, "Do you have any idea what it feels like to not fit in anywhere?" There are times in all of our lives when we feel sad, lonely, and as if we don't belong.

**Write about a time when you have felt this way.**

- » What happened? What made you feel so alone?
- » What can you do when you feel lonely or hopeless? What helps you feel better when you are having those feelings?
- » Who can you turn to for support when you need to feel understood?

## EMOTIONS

- Natasha has been bottling her anger for months. Despite her insistence that she is "not a cryer," she finally reaches her breaking point, and her feelings explode: "...the tears come. They've been waiting a long time to come out."

**What pushes Natasha to finally release and express all of the feelings she's been holding onto?**

- » What future American experiences does Natasha grieve over missing out on?
- » What are Natasha's fears about returning to life in Jamaica?
- » How do you think it feels for Natasha to finally release her bottled-up feelings?

## Checkpoint

- **Students should demonstrate a strong command of the standard written conventions of English, while establishing and maintaining a formal writing style.**
  - » Students should use capital letters appropriately, end each sentence with a period, and use other punctuation accurately. Student writings should be formal in style, rather than conversational.
  - » For example, "I can relate to the experiences of the main character, Junior, who has faced so many obstacles."

## Extension Activity

There is no doubt that your students have heard at least some of the national debate surrounding immigration — this is a timely social and political topic that has been discussed and explored in schools, homes, and across all forms of media. Your students will come to *The Sun Is Also a Star* with pre-existing knowledge and assumptions about immigration and deportation; engaging with this text will support them to explore, question, and deepen their understanding of this complex topic. Coach students to complete the reflection activity, writing about what they already knew and thought about immigration before reading.

### Materials:

- » Immigration: Reflection Handout



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

What thoughts, opinions, and feelings about immigration do I bring to the reading?

From where have I already learned or heard about this topic?

How does this book approach the topic of immigration?

This was interesting or surprising to me:

What I'd like to know more about is:

How does immigration affect me? How am I personally connected to this topic?

You probably come to today's reading with your own ideas and thoughts about the topic of immigration. *The Sun is Also a Star* will help you to explore, question, and deepen your understanding of this complex topic by seeing through the characters' perspectives. Today's activity asks you to explore what you've already heard and thought about this important issue.

## Immigration: Reflection

# Appendix

## Additional Activities

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### Get to Know MFI

**Moving Forward Institute** is a nonprofit publisher of social justice educational materials. The organization was created by the founders and staff of Moving Forward Education, a multi-generational tutoring and mentoring organization aimed at fostering academic and emotional success for underserved students in California. Since our founding in 2003, MFE has provided tutoring and mentoring services to thousands of students and has trained hundreds of young adults to enter careers in the educational field. This reading curriculum was developed by our leadership team and its advisory group, including credentialed teachers and college professors. This program has been successfully facilitated throughout California by achieving powerful and measurable results for students and schools. To learn more about our organization, or our research and data, please contact us today.

### Our Purpose

*At Moving Forward Institute, we know that students can be successful learners when their social and emotional needs are met.*

*We empower educators to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of their students by using culturally-relevant and gender-responsive reading curricula.*

### Training and Professional Development Services

*While lesson plans are designed to be easily facilitated by classroom teachers and after-school staff alike, our in-person training and professional development services will ensure fully effective implementation of the literacy curricula.*

*Additionally, we offer technical support, classroom observation, and program evaluation services to help your program be successful. Contact us for more information about these services!*

### Contact Us

*Contact us today to learn more about how the Moving Forward Institute can support your students and staff!*

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Emeryville, CA 94608

### If your students liked *The Sun is Also a Star* . .

*...they might love some of our other book selections! We suggest that you check out Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe, The Hate U Give, or The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian. Please visit our website today to browse our full selection of socially and emotionally rich novel-based curricula!*