

Educator Discussion Guide

THE SUN IS ALSO A STAR

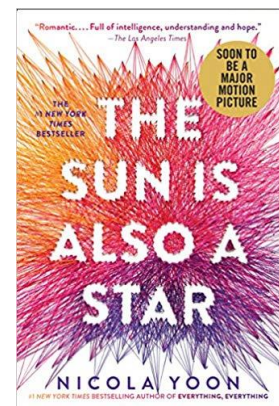
By Nicola Yoon

**Louisiana Teen Readers' Choice Award Nominee 2018-2019
Grade 9-12**

*Submitted by Danielle Dozar & Darcy Rohwer
School of Library and Information Science, LSU, Baton Rouge*

ABOUT THE BOOK

Natasha is a Jamaican born illegal immigrant facing deportation because of the mistakes of her father. Her family may be resigned to leaving New York, but Natasha is willing to fight tooth and nail to stay in the only home she knows. Daniel is an American citizen born to South Korean immigrant parents. He is balancing the weight of his parents' expectations and demands while having dreams and ideas far different of those of his parents. Both teens are struggling with what they want from life and the direction in which life seems to be pushing them. Daniel is a strong believer in love at first sight, that love can overcome anything, but Natasha knows love is only governed by chemicals and science and has no place in her life.



After their first fateful meeting Daniel is determined to have Natasha fall in love with him, scientifically using a list of questions thought to create love. But even if Daniel's plan works, how can love stand against the wills of their parents, federal deportation laws, and the casual racism of the world? Daniel and Natasha discuss issues that they have never told anyone before and form a bond that will test fate—if you believe in it. Set in New York City and told over the course of one day, *The Sun is also a Star* exhibits themes of family duty and dynamics, immigration and deportation, love, racism, goals and ambitions, and fate vs. choice.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nicola Yoon is the Jamaican American author of two books for young adults: *Everything, Everything*, and *The Sun is Also a Star*. She has an undergraduate degree in electrical engineering and a masters in creative writing from Emerson College. In addition to writing she works with We Need More Diverse Books as a social media team member promoting diversity

in books for all ages. She is a self-avowed hopeless romantic.

Biographical information taken from the author's website at

<http://www.nicolayoon.com/bio>

Accessed 28 September 2017.

BOOK AWARDS

2017 Michael L. Printz Honor

2017 Coretta Scott King Award: John Steptoe Award for New Talent

2017 YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults

2017 Water Award Honor

2016 National Book Award Finalist: Young People's Literature

2016 Booklist Editors' Choice: Books for Youth - Older Readers Category

PREREADING ACTIVITIES

Perspectives

Open a class discussion on first person narrators. What is first person narration? What are your favorite first person narrated stories? What can you do with first person narration that you can't do with other forms of narration? What is highlighted in a first person narrative? What is overlooked in a first person narrative? After a brief discussion split the class into three groups. Each group will write a brief first person narrative about a hypothetical fight in between classes. One group will write from the perspective of a teacher, one will write as a student who sees the fight, and one group will write as a student in the fight. Encourage the students to consider their character's attitude, prior knowledge, and details in their perspective. After twenty minutes, or when the students are finished, have each group share their perspective and discuss the different viewpoints.

Immigration

News Article Speed Chatting

Instruct the students to read and print out a news article regarding current immigration issues. This can be done at home or during class time at a computer lab. Line the students up in two rows facing each other. Set a timer for 2-3 minutes and instruct the students to discuss each of their articles, highlighting the main idea and the most important points. Once the time is up, one of the rows rotates so each student has a new partner. Repeat the process as many times as needed so that everyone has discussed their articles.

Opinion Dash

Prepare a list of statements about current points of view regarding immigration issues, immigration laws, and immigration practices. Place "agree" or "disagree" signs around the room. Instruct the students to stand near the appropriate sign if they agree or disagree with the statement. Then encourage that group to prepare reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with that

particular sentence. Once they have done this, the students can then share their opinions and reasons with the class.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance of Natasha's headphones? Why is she so attached to them?
2. Describe Daniel's relationship with Charlie. How does this relationship change over the course of their childhoods? How does this relationship change over the course of the novel?
3. How is the concept of home characterized over the course of the story?
4. How does the prologue relate to the themes and structure of this book? How would the story change if the prologue was not included?
5. How do the side characters' stories shape the plot of this novel? Use specific examples from the text.
6. Daniel believed in fate. Natasha did not. Are you more like Daniel or Natasha? Using examples from the book, explain how you are alike.
7. Do you think the main characters were in love? What does it take to love someone? Find evidence from the book that validates your answer.
8. Does Natasha deserve to go home? Why or why not? Use examples from the book to explain your answer.
9. Who is the antagonist? Explain why you think so using examples from the book.
10. It takes most of the book before we fully learn about the situation surrounding the Kingsley's deportation. What do the partial explanations reveal about Natasha and Samuel's relationship? How does the final reveal shift Natasha's character? Use specific examples from the text.
11. Are Natasha's father's life decisions and actions entirely wrong? What are his faults? Does he have any redeeming qualities?
12. How do Natasha and Daniel's parents' histories affect the ways they interact with their children?
13. In your opinion who has 'better' parents, Natasha or Daniel? Provide specific evidence to back up your argument.
14. Do you agree or disagree with Daniel's parents' actions and ideas? Why or why not? Use examples from the book to explain your answer.
15. Daniel's and Natasha's parents are chasing the American Dream. What is the American Dream? Is it possible to achieve it? Did any of the characters achieve it?
16. Nicola Yoon uses many different narrators over the course of the book; how do these various narrators change the story being told? How would the story change if it were only narrated by either Natasha or Daniel?
17. Reference the different types of stereotypes, racism, or prejudices in the story. How are these instances important to the story? How do they affect the characters?

18. How does Natasha view the relationship between science and love at the beginning of the book? How does her viewpoint change?
19. Explain the roles of science and the arts in the story. Use examples from the book to examine the association between the parents' love of the arts (acting, painting etc.) and Daniel and Natasha's science related professions.

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Art:

- Discuss the possible interpretations of the cover art for *The Sun is Also a Star* such as many seemingly random points coming together to make something. Have students create their own interpretive books covers for books they love. If desired show students how this youtube video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hk32xz7mRJY>) on the creation of the cover art and allow them to use embroidery thread as a possible medium for their own works.

English/ Language Arts:

- Read Write Think: Lights, Camera, Action: Interviewing a Book Character
<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/lights-camera-action-interviewing-140.html>
Date Accessed: November 1, 2017
While reading, students closely examine the different characters in a novel by keeping journal entries, meeting for group discussions, and using an online graphic organizer. This extensive character examination helps them prepare for a final project that involves creating an interview-style television show in which students write the script and assume the roles of the television host and the characters on the show. The lesson plan and activities can be adapted to fit *The Sun is Also a Star*.
- Weebly: Laura Smith Toptine's Teaching Portfolio
Love at First Sight Debate
<https://ljsmith6.weebly.com/debate-about-love-at-first-sight-lesson-plan.html>
Date Accessed: November 1, 2017
The teacher will introduce students to the concept of love at first sight. They will then divide into two groups based on whether or not they believe it does exist and argue their perspective. The students will be able to partake in a Socratic debate about whether or not love at first sight does exist, analyze the main character's relationship, and support their answers with examples from the text. The lesson plan and activities should be adapted to fit *The Sun is Also a Star*.
- The idea of poetry runs through *The Sun is Also a Star* in several different ways. After discussing the major ideas of the work such as family, home, fate, and love, read Emily Dickinson's poem "'Hope' is the thing with feathers - (314)." Have students compose

their own poem on one of the major ideas of *The Sun is Also a Star* in the style of Emily Dickinson. Allow them to share their works if they so choose.

Social Studies:

- Immigration: Stories, Struggles, and Debates: The Curriculum Companion for Immigration: The Ultimate Teen Guide by Tatyana Kleyn
<https://immigrationcurriculum.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/immigration-curriculum-final-draft.pdf>

Date accessed: November 1, 2017

This curriculum unit is designed for high school students and offers lesson plans on various topics related to immigration issues, including current policy debates, the role of the media in shaping perceptions on immigration, and diverse immigrant experiences within the United States. The unit is divided into five lessons of varying duration and concludes with a culminating project that integrates knowledge and skills covered throughout the unit. The lesson plan and activities can be adapted to fit *The Sun is Also a Star*.

Science:

- Discuss the various chemical and hormonal reactions that occur as people are falling in love. Have the students chart out each stage of love and the corresponding chemicals released. Open a discussion of other major feelings and their associated brain chemical. Have students consider the ‘realness’ of these emotions and discuss their reasonings.
- Have groups of students explain what the universe is made of with one written explanation per group. As a class watch the TEDed video on dark matter and answer the think questions. Have the groups discuss the video and edit or rewrite their explanation to include their new understandings.

<https://ed.ted.com/lessons/dark-matter-the-matter-we-can-t-see-james-gillies#watch>

Date accessed: November 1, 2017

Vocabulary:

Futile	Cynical	Assertion
Erudite	Benevolence	Hectic
Vortex	Discern	Haggard
Patois	Nonsensical	Nebulous
Paradox	Serotonin	Nihilism
Aforementioned	Euphoria	Copacetic
Exasperation	Existential	

RELATED WEBSITES

American Museum of Natural History: Arthur Ross Hall of Meteorites

<https://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/permanent-exhibitions/earth-and-planetary-sciences-halls/arthur-ross-hall-of-meteorites>

A description of the Arthur Ross Hall of Meteorites with information on meteorites, planetary creation, and space as well as specific information on the meteorite Ahnighito

***The Sun is Also a Star* International Cover Gallery**

<http://www.nicolayoon.com/sun-covers>

An updating gallery of the cover art of the international editions of *The Sun is Also a Star*

The New York Times: The 36 Questions that Lead to Love

<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/11/fashion/no-37-big-wedding-or-small.html>

The article that Daniel uses to help Natasha fall in love with him, including the questions asked and a link to the scientific study referenced in the story.

United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

<https://www.uscis.gov/>

United States Immigration website. Students can view laws, regulations, and the different ways people can become citizens.

TeachingBooks.net: *The Sun Is Also a Star*

<https://www.teachingbooks.net/tb.cgi?tid=51307&a=1>

This website offers convenient links to Nicola Yoon's various websites, audio excerpts from the book, and 5 author interviews to use in the Character Interview assignment.