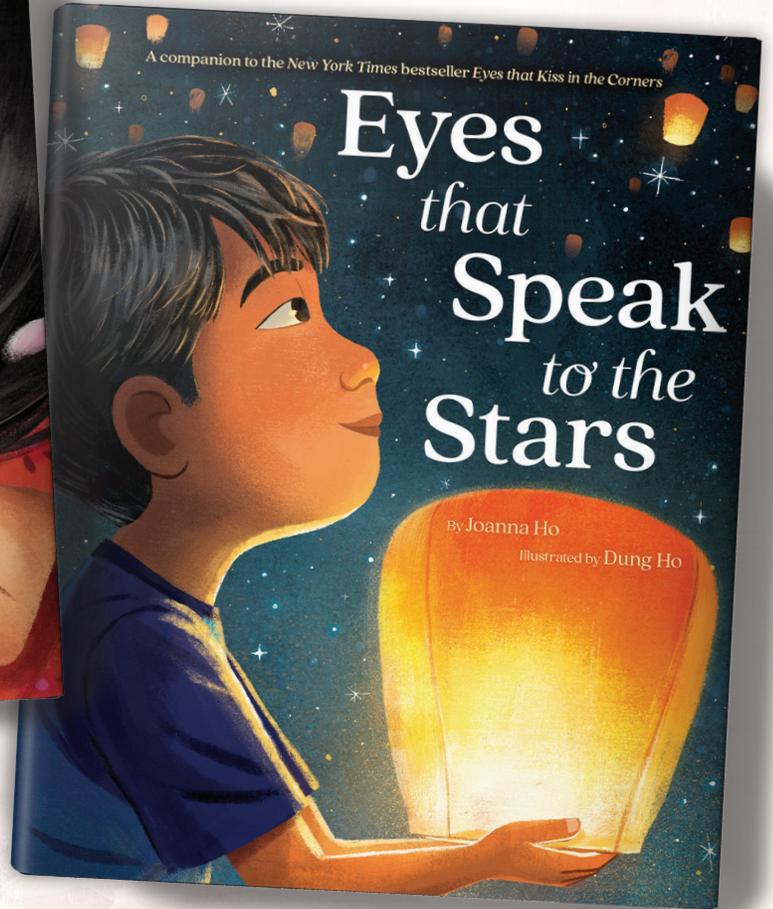
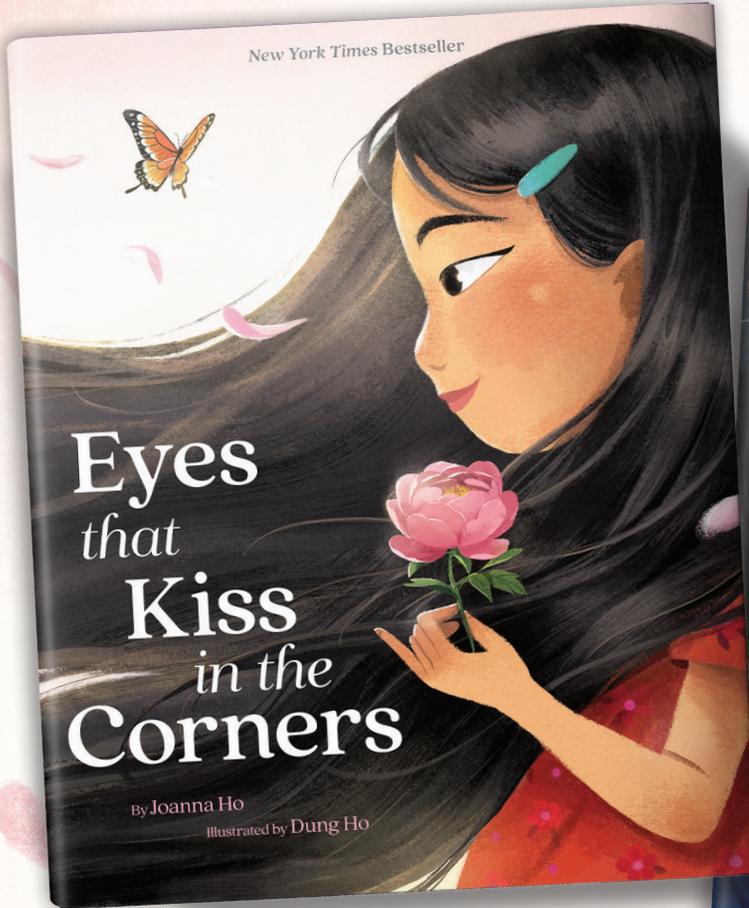
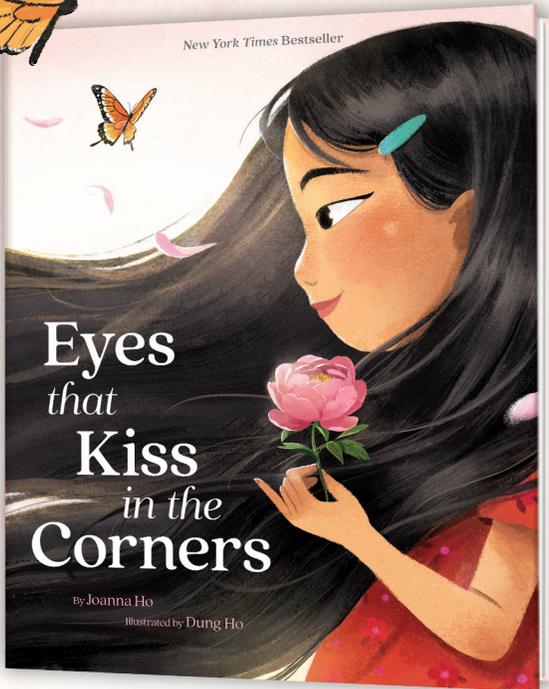


EDUCATORS' GUIDE

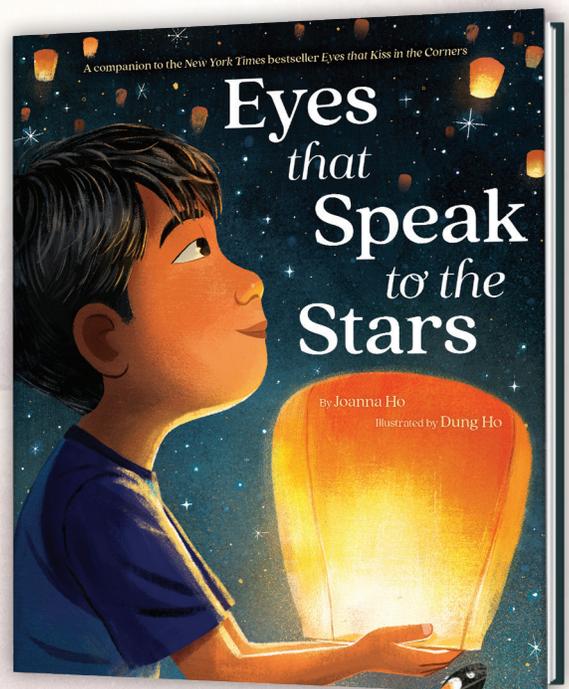


ABOUT THE BOOKS



Eyes that Kiss in the Corners is exquisitely written and illustrated in passionate celebration of a young girl's eyes, shaped beautifully like "crescent moons." They are more than their mere shape and are filled with stories. They speak of generations before her, namely of her mama and *amah*. They are also an example to her *mei-mei*, whose gaze looks up to her. The young girl's eyes embody love, strength, and history.

Eyes that Speak to the Stars is a remarkable book, poetically written and magnificently illustrated to affirm a young boy's journey to understanding the strength and story that come from the shape of his eyes. The young boy is reminded by *Baba* that "his eyes shine like a runway path," show deep history like *Agong's*, and are full of joy like *Di-Di's*. His eyes share power and his family's heritage.



Eyes *that Kiss* in the Corners

Discussion Questions

1. Notice the language used to describe other girls' eyes at the beginning of the book. What do phrases like "sapphire lagoons," "Lace trim on ballgowns" make you think of? Why do you think these are the phrases the author chose to use to show the young girl feeling different?
2. The young girl in the story mentions three other people whose eyes also resemble hers. Who are they? What does the girl call each of them? Why are they significant?
3. What are some phrases the author uses to describe the girl's eyes? What ideas do these phrases convey about her eyes? What details do you notice in the illustrations? In what ways do the illustrations support or add meaning to the text?
4. What kinds of figurative language does the author use to describe the young girl's eyes? How does this figurative language add meaning/help you better understand the girl's eyes?
5. What messages do Mama's eyes convey to the young girl? How are their eyes alike? How does the young girl feel when she is with Mama?
6. In turn, whose eyes do Mama's eyes look like? Similarly, in what ways is this beloved family member also important to the young girl? How does this individual's eyes tell the young girl she is precious and loved?
7. When the young girl is with her amah, what does she learn from her eyes? What stories do Amah's eyes tell the young girl? What stories do your family members' eyes tell you?
8. Why is Mei-Mei so special to the young girl in the story? How is the young girl's relationship with Mei-Mei different than those who are older than her, like Mama and Amah? Who do you think has the greatest influence on the young girl?
9. What are your strengths? In what ways do you celebrate the power of your strengths like the young girl in the story? Share with your class five statements about yourself and where you come from that highlight your strengths and unique qualities.
10. Thumb through the book and take a look at the stunning illustrations by Dung Ho. Which page of illustrations is your favorite? Why? What is most meaningful about the illustrations to you? Share with your classmates.

Extension Activities

1. **Celebrating Me.** Celebrate all that makes you wonderfully you. Create an "All About Me Poster" that encompasses a number of your favorite things, such as sports, colors, hobbies, school subjects, places to visit, games, foods, and/or ice cream flavors. Draw illustrations to accompany your answers on your poster and share it with your class in a "Uniquely You Exhibition."
2. **Mirror, Mirror on the Wall.** Study Dung Ho's dazzling pictures carefully. Look at the expressions of the young girl, Mama, Amah, and Mei-Mei. What stories do their faces tell us? Prop up a small mirror in front of you to look at your face. What do you love about yourself? Where are your features from and what stories do they tell? On a blank piece of drawing paper, draw a self-portrait and highlight the features that make you uniquely you.
3. **Imagination Station with Joanna Ho.** Joanna Ho has a lyrical, elegant style of writing. She often compares the eyes of loved ones to an object of beauty. The eyes of all in the story come "alive" with her vivid description. How could you use Joanna Ho's lyrical writing as a mentor text to describe the eyes of someone you love in your family? Share these with the class and see how you can use colorful adjectives to bring life to your own loved ones' eyes.
4. **Go Figure.** Joanna Ho expertly uses figurative language to make her words dance on the page. She specifically uses *similes* and *metaphors* to compare the beloved women in her life to things in the universe. What are the characteristics of a simile? What are the characteristics of a metaphor? What are the differences between the two? Create a chart of both metaphors and similes for members in your own family. What metaphors and similes could you use to make your words dance on a page?

Guide created by Esther H. Ra,
Ed.D., M.A., teacher educator,
university career advisor, literacy
specialist, and certified teacher.



Dear Reader,

Eyes that Kiss in the Corners is ultimately a story about love. It is the story of the love shared between generations, the love we must develop for ourselves, and the love that we use to create change in the world.

It is also a personal story. I, like many Asian children around the world, grew up wishing for bigger eyes and longer eyelashes. For too many years, I wanted to fit standards of beauty that did not reflect me, my family, or my culture. I didn't realize that wishing for different eyes was also a rejection of so much more. My outlook began to change one evening while I stood in line at a convenience store in Taiwan. I flipped through a magazine and was amazed at all the beautiful people on its pages—people who looked like me and had eyes like mine. In that moment, I began to realize that I could be—that I was—beautiful too.

The lyrical prose of *Eyes that Kiss in the Corners* flows with the narrator through sweet snuggles with her mother, inspiring talks with her Amah, and playful romps with her little sister. Each moment helps the narrator develop a stronger sense of identity, a greater pride in her heritage, and a deeper connection with family.

For those of us who are marginalized and made invisible by dominant definitions of beauty (and who isn't?), learning to recognize our own beauty requires confronting, disrupting, and changing beliefs that have been ingrained in our cores. It requires loving and lifting ourselves and others.

Learning to recognize our own beauty is an act of revolution.

I hope that *Eyes that Kiss in the Corners* helps to build a world in which all children recognize their own beauty. I hope it inspires revolution.

Thank you for picking up *Eyes that Kiss in the Corners*. This is a book that celebrates family relationships while disrupting definitions of beauty that render most of the world invisible.

With love,

Joanna Ho



Eyes *that* Speak *to* the Stars

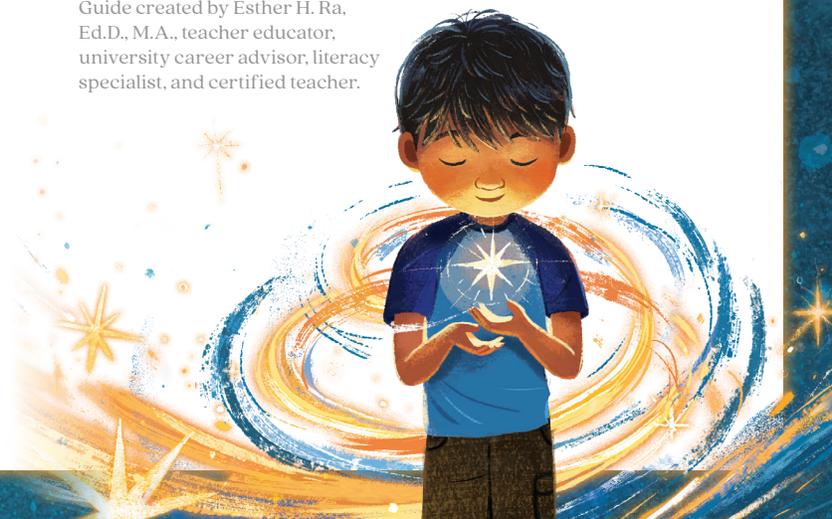
Discussion Questions

1. In the beginning of the story, a troubling event occurs; this is called a microaggression. What happens? Why do you think this microaggression is so hurtful to the young boy? Why do you think the two eyes drawn like slits made such a harmful impact?
2. Who is Baba and how does he comfort the young boy? What do Baba's eyes tell the young boy? What do you think the young boy learns about himself through his relationships with Baba?
3. We often resemble people in our families. Who are you most like in your family? How are you most like them? Who makes you feel like you can "soar above the clouds" and in what ways?
4. Why is it significant that Baba's eyes resemble someone else's in the young boy's family? What is this individual's relationship to the young boy?
5. What stories do Agong's eyes tell the young boy? What do you think it means when Agong looks at the young boy like he's "the only answer that matters?" What does the young boy learn about himself through his relationship with Agong?
6. The young boy goes for early morning walks with his Agong. What are some everyday rituals you do with a member of your family? Who do you share the special time with? Why do you enjoy this special activity?
7. Whose eyes do Agong's look like? Describe this person's relationship to the young boy. How do you know? How does this person impact the main character?
8. The boy in the story has a moment of heartbreak in the beginning of the story. He also mentions that his eyes and those of his loved ones allow him to realize that he can "break through dark and doubt." What do you think this means? Have you had moments where you had doubt? What did you do and how did you overcome it?
9. What are some "impossibilities" that you dream about? What dreams are nurtured by the people in your family? What hopes do you have for the future? How does your family help you to dream big and be "visionary"?
10. Dung Ho captures the wonder and love the young boy has for his family. Looking at the beautiful illustrations by Dung Ho, which are your favorite? Why? What strengths do her illustrations bring to the young boy?

Extension Activities

1. **Speak to the Stars.** The young boy's eyes "spoke to the stars." If you could speak to a star, what would you say and why? Sometimes people make wishes on stars. Cut out some stars and write some of your wishes on them. Hang your stars on a hanger or sticks to create a mobile that you can hang in your room.
2. **The Power of Story.** The young boy's Agong has the perspective of his ancestors and can "gaze into the distance." Interview a member of your family who is much older than you. Create a list of questions to ask about their life as a child and the lives of their parents before them. What was it like for them growing up? What parts of history can be shared from their perspective? What lessons can you learn from their "gaze"?
3. **What Is Your Superpower?** Everyone has treasures inside that unfold when our loved ones remind us that we have them. We sometimes forget about them because they are a part of us. What is your superpower? How are you strong? What are the ways you "soar into the clouds" with your natural talents? Create a superhero costume highlighting your superpower. Draw, build, or sew your design and explain to the class how your design choices showcase your strengths.
4. **Little Lights.** Grab a flashlight and create a fort! The young boy in the story has a playful relationship with Di-Di, his younger brother. They share a loving bond, full of joy and laughter. Do you have a younger sibling, cousin, or neighbor who you can shine a flashlight together with? Who is it? What are ways you can encourage them and show them they are special too? With permission from a parent, ask if you can share your flashlight with them under the fort. Perhaps, you can even share a snack together!

Guide created by Esther H. Ra,
Ed.D., M.A., teacher educator,
university career advisor, literacy
specialist, and certified teacher.



Dear Reader,

First, thank you so much for your support of *Eyes that Kiss in the Corners*. I wish I could give each of you a (germ-free) hug and look you in the eye to tell you what your support has meant in a particularly challenging year. I'm thrilled to be able to introduce its companion book, *Eyes that Speak to the Stars*. This is a book that showcases the strength of family relationships, history, and culture in the face of racist microaggressions at school.

Like its predecessor, *Eyes that Speak to the Stars* is ultimately a story about love. It is the story of the love shared between generations, the love we must develop for ourselves, and the love that we use to create change in the world.

The anti-Asian violence in Atlanta and around the country has heightened national consciousness of the racism faced by a diverse Asian community. As many have noted, this racism and violence is not new, but the history and stories of the Asian community have been rendered all but invisible in curriculum and culture. Too many of us have endured the pain and humiliation of classmates pulling up their eyes into slants and chanting gibberish meant to imitate our ancestral languages. Only when we learn the language and tools of disruption can we build toward a different future.

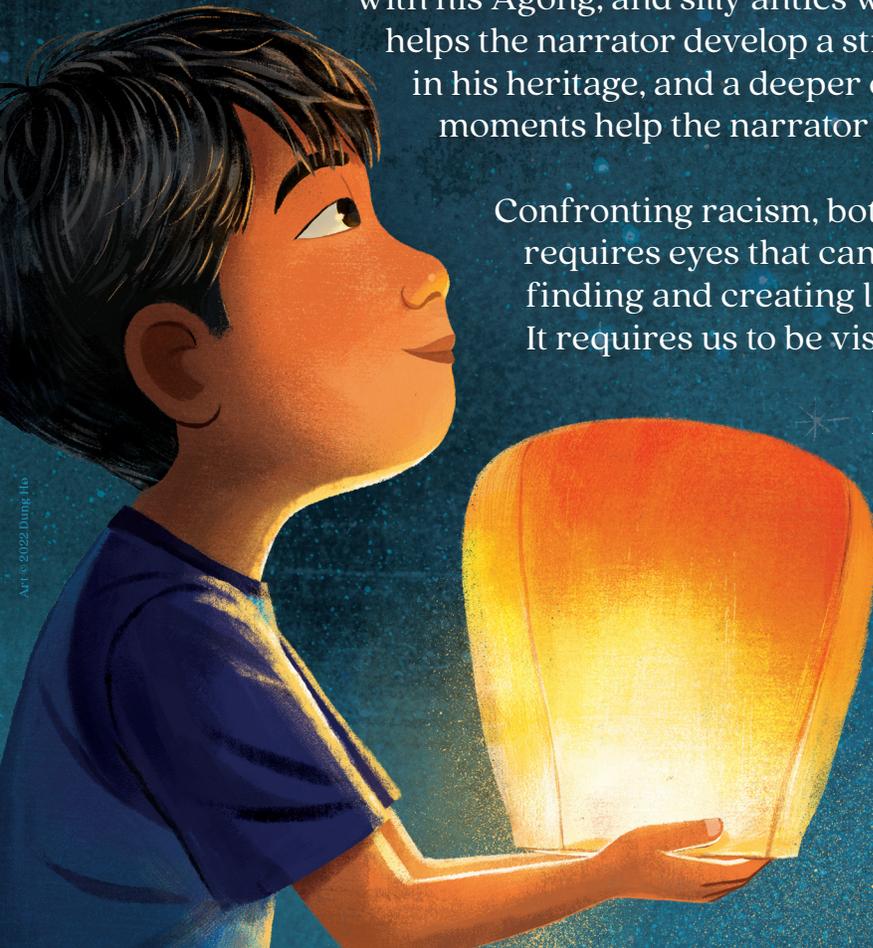
The lyrical prose of *Eyes that Speak to the Stars* flows with the narrator from a hurtful incident at school to empowering moments with his father, inspiring talks with his Agong, and silly antics with his baby brother. Each moment helps the narrator develop a stronger sense of identity, a greater pride in his heritage, and a deeper connection with family. Together, these moments help the narrator step into his own power.

Confronting racism, both interpersonal and structural, requires eyes that can see new possibilities. It requires finding and creating light in spite of the darkness. It requires us to be visionary.

I hope *Eyes that Speak to the Stars* can open critical dialogue about matters of race, history, invisibility, power, and responsibility. I hope it pushes us to see and build toward a future of shared humanity and liberation. I hope it helps us become visionary.

With love,

Joanna Ho





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joanna Ho is the *New York Times* Bestselling author of *Eyes that Kiss in the Corners*, *Playing at the Border: A Story of Yo-Yo Ma*, and *Eyes that Speak to the Stars*. She is passionate about equity and inclusion in books and education and is currently the vice principal of a high school in the San Francisco Bay Area. Homemade chocolate chip cookies, outdoor adventures, and dance parties with her kids make Joanna's eyes crinkle into crescent moons.

Visit her at www.joannahowrites.com.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Dung (pronounced Dzung) **Ho** is a *New York Times* bestselling illustrator based in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Her work focuses on children's books.

She also loves to draw interesting characters with unique personalities. When she is not drawing, she enjoys cooking, watching movies, walking, and tending to her plants.

Visit her at www.behance.net/hanhdung.

