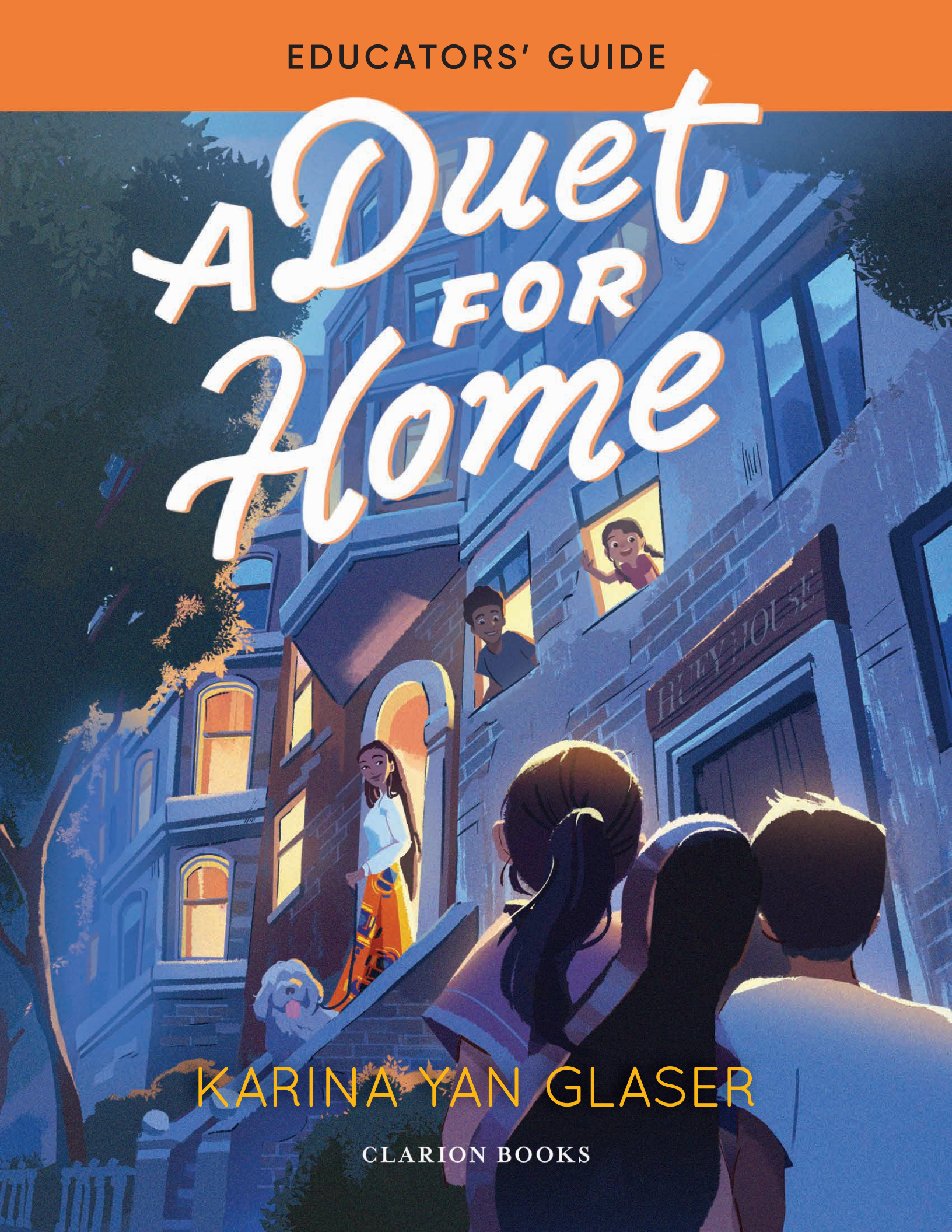


EDUCATORS' GUIDE

A Duet FOR Home



KARINA YAN GLASER

CLARION BOOKS



About the Book

In the past six months, June has lost her beloved father, and her grief-stricken mother no longer works, talks, or cares for June and her sister, Maybelle. Evicted from their apartment, June, Maybelle, and Mom now find themselves at the doorsteps of Huey House, a shelter for homeless families, with only their clothes and a few prized possessions, including June's viola. Though instruments are strictly banned there, June's determination to keep her viola softens Marcus, head of security, who helps June keep it under the radar. Later, when June befriends Tyrell and Jeremiah, they reveal a safe place for June to practice her viola, and June discovers a kindred spirit in Tyrell, who loves classical music as much as she does. But just when life at Huey House is starting to feel like a home again, news breaks of an upcoming City Hall policy that threatens everything. Can June, Tyrell, and Jeremiah stop the wheels of City Hall from forcing them out of Huey House? Don't bet against one very determined young lady and her friends!

About the Author

Karina Yan Glaser is a former teacher and now a contributor to Book Riot. Karina lives in Harlem, New York City, with her husband, two daughters, and an assortment of rescued animals. One of her proudest achievements is raising two kids who can't go anywhere without a book. Visit her online at karinaglaser.com, on Twitter @KarinaYanGlaser, and on Instagram @KarinalsReadingAndWriting.



Photo by Corey Hayes

Before Reading

Karina Yan Glaser begins with the following quote by Yuyi Morales: "Someday we will become something we haven't even yet imagined." As a class, ask students to reflect and discuss the meaning of the quote. Then have students write a short narrative about a personal experience when they or a family member (or a person from history) was able to accomplish something amazing that would not have been predicted or even "imagined" at one time. Have students include: the accomplishment, why it was not expected or "imagined," and the enduring impact of the accomplishment. Have students share the narratives in small groups. At the end of the book, the quote will certainly apply to both June and Tyrell. As a class, return to the quote and have students discuss how the quote applies to the two main characters.

Discussion Questions

1. Speaking to Marcus about her viola, June says, "There's no way I'm letting you take this away from me" (p. 7). Where does June find the strength to stand up to Marcus, the Huey House head of security she has just met? Why is the viola so important to her?
2. What has given Maybelle comfort since her father's death? What has given June comfort? What circumstances have made it difficult for both of them to heal?
3. In addition to meals and a roof over their head, what support and guidance have the residents received from Huey House staff to help them on their journey to eventual independence? How does Ms. G, in particular, connect with and help residents of Huey House heal from the traumas that brought them there?
4. What was Tyrell's life like before he and his mom moved to Huey House? How did he do in school? How has his life changed since he moved to Huey House? What caused the changes?
5. Tyrell battles some understandable anger issues. What is he angry about? Who is he angry with? How have the staff, Ms. G, Marcus, and Mamo helped him and taught him to deal with his anger?
6. Separately, June and Tyrell each learn about the proposed new housing program. How could the new program actually be detrimental to the residents of Huey House overall? Why does HQ suggest to Ms. MacMillan that she get rid of Ms. Gonzalez, the family services director?
7. How does Tyrell show that he truly does love classical music? How does classical music make Tyrell feel? What is Tyrell's reaction when June says she knows that he wants to learn to play an instrument?
8. Domenika, the talented violinist and teacher who lives next door, is at times harsh and unapproachable. What evidence is there to show that she really does care about June and Tyrell, despite her prickly demeanor?
9. In the park when the children release the mice to freedom, Maybelle says a prayer over them. How could the words of her prayer relate to Maybelle's experience? Why does her prayer affect Tyrell so deeply?
10. How has Mom "abandoned" (p. 203) June and Maybelle? What responsibilities has June assumed that should have been responsibilities of her mother?
11. Why does Tyrell take it so personally when he learns that Jeremiah and his mom are leaving Huey House? What had he and Jeremiah pledged? How does Tyrell react? Why is the "broken promise" the "worst betrayal of all" (p. 242)?
12. How do the people of Huey House react when Maybelle is missing? How does Tyrell's quick thinking help locate Maybelle? How does their reunion affect June, Maybelle, and Mom?
13. How do Mr. Ortiz's words in his letter to Tyrell comfort him and help him to move on from his anger? How does the impromptu musical duet between Tyrell and June reflect their bond? Why is it so important to Tyrell that he share the letter with June?
14. How does June feel when Ms. Tang speaks about Vivaldi and his job at the orphanage? Why is the attack by Henrietta Woo particularly hurtful to June? How does it mobilize June to personally go to City Hall?
15. How do June and Tyrell take action and enlist others to mobilize for the mayor's press conference? Who shows up to support them and what do they do? How do June, Tyrell, and Jeremiah all speak up for the residents of Huey House?

Extension Activities

- **A Musical Friendship.** June and Tyrell quickly become friends and mutual supporters, helping each other follow their musical passion and encouraging each other in times of need. Though the exact circumstances that have landed both their families in Huey House are different, June and Tyrell have much in common. Have students work with a partner to create a Venn Diagram of their similarities and differences. Then have students write a poem-for-two voices for the two characters highlighting what they have in common and how they are different using lines of unison and alternating lines read by one character. Have partners practice and present their poems to the class.
- **Huey House Healing.** Tyrell said in his speech at City Hall that Huey House "saved my life" (p. 340); Jeremiah added, "I owe Huey House everything" (p. 341); and June shared that Huey House has "been a place to get strong and get the help we need" (p. 343). Working in small groups, have students brainstorm and create a three-column chart of all the supports for basic needs, job training, mental health resources, and other staff support, encouragement, and kindness that Huey House has provided the families of Tyrell, Jeremiah, and June. Then have students create a brochure of essential services that should be made available to help individuals and families heal from the traumas that have forced them into homelessness. Have each group select a different area city and send their brochure to that city inquiring about the supports that city provides for the homeless. Groups should share and post their brochures and responses from the cities.
- **It's a Matter of Luck!** In Chinese, the word for "four" is considered bad luck; the Chinese word for "eight" is considered good luck. Throughout the book, June focuses on all the good and bad luck signs she encounters: the number of letters in a name, the time of the day that incidents occur, the number of steps from one place to the next. Have students work in small groups to research both Chinese superstitions and common superstitions from other cultures in the United States. Have students, where possible, trace the superstitions to their origins. Then have students create and illustrate a book of superstitions, including the information on the origins of the superstitions. Arrange for the books of superstitions to be on display in the school library.
- **Letters to City Hall.** June, Tyrell, and Jeremiah all attempt to write letters to area politicians regarding the "new housing program". On the day of her press conference, the mayor of the city says, "I don't always get to hear the voices of the people I serve," (p. 344); yet the residents and staff of Huey House all have stories to tell of the impact of Huey House on the residents' lives. Have students select from among the following characters: June, Maybelle, Mom, Tyrell, Jeremiah, Lulu, Ms. Vega, Abuela, Marcus, Ms. G, Humberto, and Mamo. Have each student write a letter to city hall from that character's standpoint explaining why the new program should not be implemented, including reasons and examples. Have students share letters in small groups and post around the room.

Guide created by Janice Reynolds, MEd., Secondary ELA Coordinator, school administrator, and elementary - secondary English teacher (retired).