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Behind The Mountains



Synopsis

First Person Fiction is dedicated to the immigrant experience in modern America. In "Behind the Mountains" Edwidge Danticat tells the story of Celiane and her family's struggles in Haiti and New York. It is election time in Haiti, and bombs are going off in the capital city of Port-au-Prince. During a visit from her home in rural Haiti, Celiane Espérance and her mother are nearly killed. Looking at her country with new eyes, Celiane gains a fresh resolve to be reunited with her father in Brooklyn, New York. The harsh winter and concrete landscape of her new home are a shock to Celiane, who witnesses her parents' struggle to earn a living, her brother's uneasy adjustment to American society, and her own encounters with learning difficulties and school violence.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Launching the First Person Fiction series of immigrant coming-of-age stories, Danticat's (Breath, Eyes, Memory, for adults) debut novel for young people follows Celiane's journey from her mountain village in Haiti to join her father in Brooklyn. The narrative opens in October 2000 and unfolds as a journal, in which 13-year-old Celiane recounts events in a charming, innocent voice ("I must go soon, sweet little book, to prepare for Manman's return from the market"). Daily activities (e.g., preparing for market, listening to cassettes her father sends) give way to mounting political tensions as the presidential election approaches. Oddly, however, Celiane's childlike hopefulness persists even after she and her mother are injured by a pipe bomb ("Dear, sweet little book, if I could hold

onto you so tightly that you are now here with me, why couldn't I have done the same for Manman?"). In December, Celiane, her mother and brother rejoin her father, who left five years before due to economic pressures. Through Celiane's spare if somewhat simplistic narration, the author captures the color and texture of Haitian life as well as the heroine's adjustment to New York. While readers may want to hear more about her experiences in Brooklyn, they will appreciate the truthfulness of the family's struggle to reconnect (even if the presentation of some of the historical information seems clunky). Danticat details her own departure from Haiti as an afterword. Ages 11-15. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Grade 5 Up-As the best student in the class, Celiane is given a "sweet little book" in which she decides to keep a journal. Her entries date from October 2000 to March 2001, and chronicle the family's departure from their homeland of Haiti to join her father, who had immigrated to New York City five years earlier. In graceful prose, Danticat seamlessly weaves together all that such a decision involves: the difficulties of rural life on the island and a longing for an absent parent combined with a fondness for her tiny mountain village with "the rainbows during sun showers- the smell of pinewood burning, the golden-brown sap dripping into the fire

Purchased for my daughter's 6th grade class reading assignment.

So boring

Read as part of a course on bilingualism & biculturalism this book provided a personal glimpse into a child's life and how it changed.

didn't like it from page 1. wish i hadn't even spent the \$6 that i did. not worth the money.

Not only is this a well-written, interesting story of a young girl's life in Haiti, it truly gives the reader a taste of what Haiti is like today. My daughter, age 10, and I read it together, after my first trip to Haiti on a medical mission. I felt like I was back in Haiti, and loved the description, historical information and perspective of a young girl watching her life and country change. *Behind the Mountains* is written in diary form, and really draws the reader in, allowing her to see things through the eye's of the young narrator as her family is uprooted and moved to another country. I highly recommend this to young readers (4th-6th grade) or even adults who enjoy historical fiction, learning about other

cultures, or are undergoing family changes. I give this a 5 star rating for the wonderful prose, easy readability, smooth incorporation of beautiful cultural and historical facts, and engaging characters.

Living in rural Haiti, Celiane Esperance, her mother, and brother Moy anxiously await the cassettes Papa sends them from New York each month. Forced by economic circumstances to seek work in America, Papa has been gone for three years and the family anticipates joining him when the proper visas can be arranged. While visiting an aunt in Port-Au-Prince, Celiane and her mother are nearly killed by a bomb, leaving them more determined to join Papa. Just as there are always more mountains behind the mountains, however, the family finds that there are more challenges to face when they are reunited with Papa in New York. Celiane shares her feelings about her family and experiences through the diary she was awarded by her teacher in Haiti. Beautifully written by Edwidge Danticat, recognized by The New York Times as one of our best young writers, *Behind The Mountains* explores the themes of coming of age, family relationships, separation and reunification, as well as immigration and cultural identity. *Behind The Mountains* is one of the books in the Scholastic First Person Fiction series exploring the experiences of teenagers of various backgrounds who immigrate to America.

As I walked through the leafy Boston suburb, I saw a uniformed chauffeur waiting outside a big house. He was gazing into the trees, obviously enjoying the quiet spring morning. A nametag on his lapel identified him as "Jean." "Are you from Haiti?" I asked. He nodded, surprised. "I just read a great book about your country," I told him. "I learned about the beautiful mountains and hibiscus flowers there." I watched the smile spread across his face. Were it not for Edwidge Danticat's young adult novel, *Behind the Mountains*, I might have walked wordlessly past this stranger. Now I was curious about his journey, and he was thrilled by my knowledge of his country and culture. That's the purpose of Orchard's First Person Fiction series - to create understanding and empathy for the immigrants around us. Using fictional diary entries, Danticat recounts Celiane Esperance's journey from a rural town to Port-au-Prince to Brooklyn. I painlessly learned about Haitian history and politics, and gained insight into why some Haitians desire to immigrate to America. The book is also particularly written for immigrant teens. Danticat, the acclaimed author of three adult novels, expertly depicts Celiane's high hopes of seeing her father again and the subsequent stressful reality of a family reunion. Reading about Celiane's first miserable days in New York will encourage immigrant teens to welcome other newcomers. As Celiane describes her sorrow over her father's conflict with her older brother Moy, I remembered my older siblings hammering out compromises with our

parents. These and other themes common to immigrants from any country make me wish this book had been around when I was reading out on that Flushing fire escape.

Book review of behind the mountainMy book is called Behind the Mountain by Edwidge Danticat. A family is broke and they are trying to get to New York. They live in Haiti. Bombs are going off all over the place. A girl in the family is trying to help her mom from almost dying from a bomb. That was my introduction. The main characters are the dad, manman which is the mom and Celiane the dater. Manman is almost dead from a bomb. Celiane want's her dad. The father is in New York giving money to the mom and dater and brother who also has money. The brother is working to give them money to. Those were all the characters. In this book they want to leave there country. There is a lot of bombing happing so they want to leave their country Haiti. In Haiti 2 kiddies died from the bombing happing in Haiti. They finally got to New York and they were happy because they would not die any more. When Celiane got to New York she had a good school and like before. That was my setting. The family is trying to get courage to move to New York with there dad. They don't want to be in bombs any more. The girl want's a better school. The family is trying to get money from people to go to New York. The theme is courage. If you read this book you will be able to visualize the book. So if you read it now I won't let you stop. This book is about one big adventure in 2 different countries. If you like weapons I think you should read this book. That was my conclusion.

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