



A Sky That Sings

written by Anita Sanchez & George Steele

illustrated by Emily Mendoza

About the Book

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Format: Hardcover, 40 pages
10 × 8 in

ISBN: 9781643795379

Reading Level: Grade 2-3

Interest Level: Grades K-5

Guided Reading Level: L

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:
N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

Themes: Biodiversity, Animals (Birds), Childhood Experiences and Memories, Disabilities, Environment and Nature, Exploring Ecosystems, Parks and Neighborhoods, Families (Aunts), Realistic Fiction, Imagination, Nature and Science, North America, STEM, Exercise and Healthy Habits, Five Senses

Resources on the web:

leeandlow.com/books/a-sky-that-sings/

SYNOPSIS

Mia, a blind girl who enjoys identifying birds by their distinct calls and songs, leads her aunt through the park on a bird-listening adventure!

Mia and her tía are spending a sunny afternoon at the park bird-listening! Some people enjoy bird-watching but as a blind person, Mia uses her other senses to identify different birds by their unique calls and songs. She calls it bird-listening.

Mia loves naming each of the birds that she hears. Sweet! Sweet! Sweet! Is that the chipper call of a yellow warbler? At first Mia's aunt doesn't know what to expect, but with Mia's guidance, she learns to listen and enjoy the bright melodies pouring from the sky. Their adventure will take them past a lively pond, through the hush of the quiet woods, and up a breezy hilltop for a soaring encounter with Mia's favorite bird of all!

Perfect for bird lovers of every feather, *A Sky That Sings* invites us to open our senses to life's everyday treasures—the delights of nature and spending time with loved ones.

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

BACKGROUND

Listen with Mia!

Refer to the backmatter in *A Sky That Sings* to learn more about the birds and their calls featured in this book.

From the Backmatter, "More about Bird Listening"

Spring is a great time to go outdoors and use your ears! Birds have a lot to say during the springtime. The trees are covered with leaves, so it's hard for birds to see one another. But they find mates and stay in touch with their families using their voices.

Each species has a special pattern of sounds made only by that kind of bird. Birders—people who love birds and study them—often use words or phrases to describe the complicated notes. A birder might say that a barred owl is hooting "Whooo cooks for youuu?" or that an ovenbird is singing "Teacher, teacher, teacher!" Putting words to a bird's sounds can help you remember which song belongs to which bird.

Birds usually make two different types of sounds: calls and songs. Calls are what birds use to communicate with families and neighbors all year long—saying Where are you? or maybe Good food over here! Some birds have a special call that means Danger! Since hawks sometimes eat other birds, jays or blackbirds might give a warning call when a hawk comes into view. Calls are usually short, often one sound repeated over and over.

In spring, it's time for songs! Birds use songs to attract a mate. Much of the singing is done by males, who call to the females, saying Check me out! Male birds also sing loudly to warn other males: Stayaway! This is my territory! Songs are often longer and more like music. A red-winged blackbird's call is Kee! Kee!, but its song is totally different: a lilting O-ka-leeeee.

Birders often do most of their birding by ear. A good birder can identify hundreds of species of birds just by listening to their voices. To hear what the birds in this story sound like, check out the Cornell Lab of Ornithology website: www.allaboutbirds.org

Additional Sources About Birds from the Backmatter

For more information about sources used in *A Sky That Sings*, visit the following sources:

- All About Birds: The Cornell Lab of Ornithology website has audio recordings of birdsong. Cornell University has a free app called Merlin to help identify bird calls: <https://www.allaboutbirds.org>
- National Audubon Society <https://www.audubon.org>
- *Peterson First Guide to Birds* (Mariner Books, 1998.) An illustrated guide to common birds for beginning birders.

Total Blindness, Low Vision and Visual Impairments

Mia in *A Sky That Sings* is blind. The American Foundation for the Blind explains that blindness exists

on a spectrum, ranging from total blindness to low vision. Traditionally, “visually impaired” has been used to refer to those with significant sight loss however, there are many factors that need to be considered when discussing a person’s difficulty seeing.

Total blindness refers to the inability to see anything with either eye.

Low vision describes “a person who has measurable vision but has difficulty accomplishing or cannot accomplish visual tasks even with prescribed corrective lenses but who can enhance his or her ability to accomplish these tasks with the use of compensatory visual strategies, low vision devices, and environmental modifications” (Corn & Lusk, 2010, p. 4-5).

Visual impairment/visual disability is “a term that encompasses both those who are blind and those with low vision” (Corn & Lusk, 2010, p. 13). Additional factors influencing visual impairment might be contrast sensitivity, light sensitivity, glare sensitivity, and light/dark adaptation.

Consider visiting the American Foundation for the Blind online at www.afb.org/research-and-initiatives/statistics/key-definitions-statistical-terms to learn more.

Organizations for the Blind, Low Vision and Visually Impaired

The following organizations provide resources, additional information, how to discuss and the variation on the spectrum of Blindness, and more:

- Perkins School for the Blind: <https://www.perkins.org/>
- American Foundation for the Blind: <https://www.afb.org/>
- Paths to Literacy: <https://www.pathstoliteracy.org/>
- National Federation of the Blind: <https://nfb.org/>

ABLE, Audio & Braille Literacy Enhancement

ABLE is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide alternative ways for people with disabilities to read. They have brought out *A Sky That Sings* in braille for students in Wisconsin (<https://www.ablenow.org/>).

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- What do you know about birds? Do you have any favorite birds? What do they sound like? Why do you like this bird?
- What activities are meaningful to you? Why? Who do you enjoy doing these activities with?
- How do you show persistence? What does it mean to be persistent? Why is it important to

have persistence?

- What does it mean to be determined?
- Why is important to practice something? Whether you play an instrument, sport, or are learning how to do something, how does practice help you improve?
- Why are differences important? What would it be like if everyone was the same? Why is it important to be unique?
- How can you use your senses to understand and interpret the world and community around you?
- How do you enjoy nature? Do you enjoy going outside? Is there a favorite park you like going to? Who do you like going with?
- What does family mean to you? What do you like to do with your family? Are there certain things you that you like to do with someone at home, like going to the park? How do these activities make you feel?
- **Note:** Consider introducing blindness and low vision to students using the information provided in the Background section of this guide to help familiarize children who may not know or have encountered a blind or low vision student or adult. This is not necessary to engage students in the story but may be helpful for your set of students or classroom.

Note: Be cognizant of students in your classroom and aware of students' living and personal circumstances prior to reading *A Sky That Sings*. You may have students that are blind, low vision or visually impaired. Be sure to lead activities in a manner that is sensitive to the needs and emotions of your students and that demonstrates respect, rather than pity, for people who have a disability.

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Book Title Exploration: Talk about the title of the book, *A Sky That Sings*. Ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?

Read Anita Sanchez's and George Steele's biography: Read about authors Anita Sanchez and George Steele prior to reading the book. Encourage students to think about how they came up with the idea to write *A Sky That Sings* and what could have been their inspiration for writing this story. Visit Anita online at [anitasanchez.com](https://www.anitasanchez.com).

Read Emily Mendoza's biography: Read about illustrator Emily Mendoza prior to reading the book. Encourage students to think about how she used the authors' text to inspire her illustrations for *A Sky That Sings*.

Book Walk: Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, author's dedication, and Author's Note at the end. Display the book and analyze the cover. What do students notice in the illustrations?

Encourage students to stop and jot down thoughts and questions in their reading notebooks during the read-aloud when they: learn new information, see a powerful image, have an emotional reaction, have an idea, have a question, or hear new word.

Have students write feeling(s) in their notebook during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote that feeling down and have them write a journal entry about it.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- how the title fits the theme(s) of the story
- what birds Mia listens for at the park and how she identifies them
- what Mia teaches her tía at the park
- what is Mia and her tía's relationship like
- why it is important to use your senses and the different ways you can use them to engage with the world around you
- what is bird listening
- why does Mia lean into her other senses to identify birds

Encourage students to consider why the authors, Anita Sanchez and George Steele, would want to share this story with young people.

VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

Content Specific

American Robin, Black-capped Chickadee, Blue Jay, Red-winged Blackbird, Mallard, Great Blue Heron, Chipping Sparrow, White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-tailed Hawk, Mourning Dove, cane, gravel, lullaby

Academic

clump, mowed, tangled, warbling, ripples, puffing, snatches, rustling

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.**

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. How does the story begin? Where are Mia and her tía going? How does Mia feel?
2. What does Mia teach her tía about bird listening?
3. How does Mia describe her experience at the park? What senses does she use while she is at the park?
4. How does Mia's cane help her around the park?
5. What do the illustrations of the birds look like? How does the illustrator show the sound that the birds make?
6. How does the story end? How does Mia feel at the end of the story?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What does the title: *A Sky That Sings* mean to you after reading the book? Why do you think the authors chose this specific title?
2. What figurative language do you notice in *A Sky That Sings*? Why is figurative language important to the story? How do you think the figurative language helps you to picture what the authors are describing in the story?
3. What is the message of this story? What do you think the authors want to share with their readers?
4. Why do you think Mia wants to share her passion for bird listening with her tía? How does sharing an experience or interest bring people closer together?
5. What did you learn about birds and their individual voices? What bird was your favorite?
6. How can adults learn from children? How does Mia's tía learn from her?
7. Think about a time you tried to teach a person something. How did it go? How does your experience compare to Mia and her tía's experience?
8. Describe Mia and her tía's relationship. How does Mia respond when her tía asks her "How on earth can you tell the voices apart?" How does Mia help her listen?

9. How does Mia use humor when referring to her ability to see?
10. How is *A Sky That Sings* different from other books that you have read that feature blind or low vision people? What makes this book different from other books about blind or low vision people?
11. Explore the structure of this text. Does this story describe events chronologically, as comparison, as cause-and-effect, or as problems and solutions? Why do you think the authors structured the text the way they did? How does this story compare to other texts you have read?

Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion. You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. **What is one big thought that you have after reading this book?** What is your take-away from this book? What would you tell a friend about this book?
2. **What do you think Anita Sanchez's and George Steele's message is to the reader?** Think about possible motivations behind their intentions to write this book.
3. **Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kind of connections did you make between the story and your own life?** What do Mia's experiences, thoughts, and feelings mean to you?
4. **Have students make a text-to-text connection.** Did you think of any other books while reading *A Sky That Sings*? Why did you make those connections?
5. **Have students make a text-to-world connection.** What kind of connections did you make between the text and art in the book and what you have seen happening in the world, such as on television, in a newspaper, or online? What in this book made you think of that?
6. **What does family mean to you?** Think about the people in your life that you enjoy spending time with. How do these people support you?
7. **How do you use your five senses to engage with the world and community around you?** How do they help you interpret the world?

Multilingual Learners Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are multilingual learners (ML).

1. Assign ML students to partner-read the story with another classmate. Afterwards, students can create their own drawing to connect with the book's message.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading: 1) Review the

illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing. 2) Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.

4. Have students give a short talk about one of the characters in the book. Have them discuss what characteristics they admire about Mia or Tía from *A Sky That Sings*.
5. Have students give a short talk about what they identified with most from *A Sky That Sings*. Did they learn something new that they hadn't known before?
6. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose ML students to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.
7. Consider consulting www.multilinguallearningtoolkit.org/ for more ideas on how to support Multilingual Learners.

Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4-6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4-6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. Which illustration in *A Sky That Sings* do you think best shows an emotion? Explain which emotion you think it is. How does the artist portray that emotion?
2. Choose an emotion such as happiness, fear, hope, sadness, and so on. Illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *A Sky That Sings*.
3. What are the ways that Mia demonstrates determination throughout the story? How did she continue to search for her favorite bird at the park? How did she continue to teach her tía about bird listening?
4. How does Mia use humor in *A Sky That Sings*? How does humor help alleviate "difficult" moments? How do you use humor in your life?
5. How does *A Sky That Sings* show positive family relationships? How does Mia's tía support her in the story? How do your family and friends support you in your daily life?

6. Did *A Sky That Sings* help you think about how you interact with nature? How does Mia inspire you to enjoy nature?
7. Use *A Sky That Sings* to discuss how bird listening positively impacts mental health. There are several studies that have shown the positive relationship bird feeding can have on mental health, this article from the Wild Bird Feeding Institute shares more on how bird listening positively impacts mental health and anxiety (<https://www.wbfi.org/2023/07/11/the-soothing-melody-of-birds-exploring-the-mental-health-benefits-of-natures-song/>). Have students reflect on the following questions: What are the mental health benefits of bird listening? How can you incorporate more bird songs into your life?

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Learn about bird listening.** Consult the resources in the backmatter of *A Sky That Sings* for students to read more about bird listening. Have students answer the following questions: what is bird listening? Who are birders? What two kinds of sounds do birds typically make? What is the difference between the two? How do birders do their birding? Students can create informational posters that they can share within the classroom and the school community at large.
- **Conduct a figurative language study with students.** Have students go on a figurative language scavenger hunt in *A Sky That Sings*. Refer to Read Write Think's "Figurative Language Resource Page" as a tool for students to use during their search (http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson79/figresource.pdf). Create a chart with different rows for figurative language terms (i.e. simile, metaphor) and students can fill it in with specific examples from *A Sky That Sings*. Afterwards, students can experiment using figurative language in their own writing piece or poem inspired by the book.
- **How was reading a picture book different from reading a newspaper article about bird listening?** Have students read the article "What Birds Really Listen for in Birdsong (It's Not What You Think)" from Scientific American (<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/what-birds-really-listen-for-in-birdsong-its-not-what-you-think/#:~:text=But%20birds%20seem%20to%20be,or%20music%20might%20be%20dance.>). After reading, students can create a Venn Diagram with the headings "Picture Book: *A Sky That Sings*" and "Expository Nonfiction: "What Birds Really Listen for

in *Birdsong (It's Not What You Think)*" Students can compare the different formats of the texts and the information they learned in each. How are picture books helpful to digest information? How are they different from reading newspaper articles, and vice versa? How can picture books be helpful for readers to retain information?

- **Practice descriptive writing using the five senses.** Have students reread *A Sky That Sings* and analyze how the authors use descriptive writing to convey the story. How do they use the five senses throughout the story? How does Mia's character use her five senses? How does Tía's character use her five senses? After analyzing the descriptive writing, students can practice descriptive writing using a topic of your choosing. Consider consulting Reading Rockets for classroom strategies on descriptive writing and using the five senses framework to help students practice descriptive writing. (<https://www.readingrockets.org/classroom/classroom-strategies/descriptive-writing>)
- **Have students listen to co-author Anita Sanchez's WBUR Interview, "A Sky That Sings': New book invites children to enjoy bird-listening"** (<https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2025/03/07/a-sky-that-sings-book>). What did students learn about Anita? What did they learn about *A Sky That Sings* from this interview? What did they find out about bird listening from Anita's interview? Students can discuss with a partner, small group, and/or whole class.
- **Have students come up with a list of questions to interview authors Anita Sanchez and George Steele.** What do students want to know about the process behind writing a children's book? How did they come up with the idea to write *A Sky That Sings*? How did they like writing *A Sky That Sings*? What was challenging? Consider contacting Anita Sanchez online at [anitasanchez.com](https://www.anitasanchez.com) and inviting her to your school, library, or other relevant setting for an author visit.
- **Have students read other Lee & Low titles featuring characters with disabilities, including *Rainbow Joe and Me* ([leeandlow.com/books/rainbow-joe-and-me/](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/rainbow-joe-and-me/)), *Ray Charles* ([leeandlow.com/books/ray-charles/](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/ray-charles/)), and *Tenacious* ([leeandlow.com/books/tenacious](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/tenacious)).** Have students discuss the following questions after reading the three titles, including *A Sky That Sings*: What do the characters have in common? How are their disabilities represented in each book? Students can share what they connected with and learned from the three books and share their thoughts in a graphic organizer comparing the titles. For more information about teaching about disabilities, consult *Tenacious* and its Teacher's Guide (<https://www.leeandlow.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Tenacious%20Teacher's%20Guide.pdf>).
- **Ask students: What can *A Sky That Sings* teach us?** Have students share their findings. What lessons did the book teach readers over the course of the story? What did they learn from the story's message? Students can talk with partners, in small groups, or with the whole class. Consider creating a word cloud to find out what words came up the most often (<https://www.wordclouds.com>). Then students can come up with a big idea or statement about what they learned from *A Sky That Sings*.
- **Students can write a piece about a hobby that's meaningful to them.** Do students

have a hobby, such as a bird listening or another activity, that their family members or friends do that is also important to them? Mia loves bird listening. Students can write a small moment piece or another reflection on their hobby, how it makes them feel, how they practice, and why it's meaningful to them. If possible, students can show off the hobby to the class or bring in an artifact that demonstrates their hobby to the class.

- **How has a family member or a close friend impacted your life?** Do you have a family member, mentor, or close friend who has changed your life in a positive way? What were some things that person did that were significant to you? Students can write a poem, essay, or display their work in any other visual format that works best for their learning needs.
- **Have students read the Backmatter located in the back of the book.** Students can write a journal entry in response recording their reactions from reading the backmatter. Did they learn something new in the backmatter? What new information did they learn about bird listening as well as the author? What resonated with students the most after reading the Author's Note? What questions would they like to ask Anita and George about their process of writing *A Sky That Sings*? If possible, consider reaching out to Anita Sanchez for a school visit, [anitasanchez.com](https://www.anitasanchez.com).

Science/STEM/Geography

(2-LS4-1 Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity: Make observations of plants and animals to compare the diversity of life in different habitats.)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Listen to the birds mentioned in *A Sky That Sings*.** Have students refer to the backmatter and discover the sounds of each bird featured in the story. Students can visit check the Cornell Lab of Ornithology website: www.allaboutbirds.org and hear each sound. Students can jot down notes in the graphic organizer below on what they notice about each bird and how they communicate.

Bird	Song	Call
American Robin		
Black-capped Chickadee		
Blue Jay		
Yellow Warbler		
Red-Winged Blackbird		

Mallard		
Great Blue Heron		
Chipping Sparrow		
White-breasted Nuthatch		
Red-tailed Hawk		
Mourning Dove		

- **Have students select a bird from *A Sky That Sings* and create an informational poster on the bird.** Students should refer to the Backmatter and use information from the book as well as additional research to create their posters. Students can create posters using photographs, facts, diagrams, and informative captions. What do they want to share about the bird they chose? What are some fun facts about this bird? Where can this bird be found? What is their diet like? Students can share their posters with small groups, the whole class, or the school at large.
- **Create an informational poster on how to identify a bird.** Have students think about what tips Mia gives her tía on how to listen for a specific bird and have them consult the Backmatter, “More About Bird Listening” to get started on creating the informational poster. What steps are they putting on the poster? Why did they put them in that order? If additional resources are needed, students can consult the National Audubon Society to learn more on how to find a bird (<https://www.audubon.org/news/how-find-bird>). Have students illustrate their posters and present their findings to their classmates.
- **Watch the Cornell FeederWatch cam and identify any of the birds used in *A Sky That Sings*.** What bird(s) are they seeing on the cam? Are they familiar with this bird(s)? What sound is this bird(s) making? Where are these bird(s) located? Have students describe the bird(s). Students can jot down their observations. If time allows, have students write about the birds they observed using descriptive writing. Students can share their observations with the class. You can find the live bird cams from the Cornell FeederWatch here (<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/cams/all-cams/>).
- **Learn more about the birds living in your area.** Have students do a research study on the birds that live in their area. Provide students with access to the “Guide to North American Birds” from the National Audubon Society to get started on their research (<https://www.audubon.org/bird-guide>). What types of birds live in their area? What are their lives like and habitat like? How is climate change impacting their ability to live? Students can create a presentation and present their findings.

Art/Media

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Have students create a drawing, painting, or other visual representation of a hobby that they care about.** Why did students choose this hobby? Students can create posters, paintings, or other visual representations of the hobby that they're passionate about and then display their work in small groups or for the whole class to see.
- **Encourage students to select an illustration that resonated with them from the story.** Have students write a reflection about that illustration. What stood out to them? How did it make them feel? What did it make them think about?
- **Suggest that students study the illustrations in the book.** What mood(s) do the illustrations create? What do the characters' faces show about how they feel? How do students think the artist felt about the story?
- **Have students conduct an illustrator study on Emily Mendoza.** What kind of style does she use in her artwork? What do you think her process is for creating the illustrations for a children's book? Consider reaching out to Emily Mendoza for a virtual illustrator visit online at emmillustrations.com.
- **As a follow-up activity, have students come up with questions to interview Emily Mendoza.** What is her process behind creating the illustrations for a children's book? What medium did she choose to create the illustrations? Why? How did she capture the birds in the story? Mia in the park? Consider contacting Emily Mendoza for a school visit (emmillustrations.com).
- **Encourage students to select an illustration that resonated with them the most from *A Sky That Sings*.** Have students write a reflection about the illustration. What stood out to them? How did it make them feel? What did it make them think about? How did the illustrator, Emily Mendoza, capture the words of authors Anita Sanchez and George Steele?
- **Ask students to create a portrait of someone they admire or their role model using illustration, collage, or photographs.** In writing, students should describe what actions and qualities they admire about this person. How do they relate to this person? What do they admire about them? Why is it important for students to connect with people they admire in their sport or art?

School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Encourage students to interview family members and/or caregivers about a favorite or impactful childhood memory.** How did that event influence the family member? How did it affect the person's life moving forward? Consider having students, if comfortable, share their findings with a partner, a small group, or whole class. Similarly, ask

students to speak with family members about their traditions how their traditions are special to them. What is unique about each family's traditions? How did it influence them throughout their lives?

- **Have students bring home *A Sky That Sings* and share the book with other family members and/or caregivers.** Ask students to start a discussion about what their families learned from and connected with in the text.
- **Have family members and/or caregivers share hobbies that they enjoy doing in their free time.** What hobbies do they like? Why do they like this hobby? How does it make them feel? Students can share their responses with the class.
- **If families are interested in learning more about bird listening and trying it at home, encourage them to visit the National Audubon Society to learn more about birding at home** (<https://www.audubon.org/birding/how-to-start-birding>). Students can report back if they started birding at home.



Ordering Information

🌐 General Order Information:

leeandlow.com/contact/ordering

🔒 Secure Online Ordering:

leeandlow.com/books/a-sky-that-sings/

☎️ By Phone: 212-779-4400

✉️ By Mail:

381 Park Ave S, #1401
New York, NY 10016

ABOUT THE AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR

Anita Sanchez is a writer who lives in the wilds of upstate New York, where she listens for red-tailed hawks in the backyard. Many years of teaching outdoor classes have equipped her with how to introduce students of different abilities to the wonders of nature. She is the author of *Hello, Puddle!* and *Leaflets Three, Let It Be!: The Story of Poison Ivy*. Visit her online at anitasanchez.com.

George Steele has been sharing the joys of nature with children since he was a teenage counselor. His love of birds includes working to reintroduce bald eagles in upstate New York and conducting as many Christmas Bird Counts as possible. He is well known for his ability to converse with owls. George is the coauthor, with Anita Sanchez, of *Wait Till It Gets Dark: A Kid's Guide to Exploring the Night*.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Emily Mendoza is a Mexican American illustrator from Southern California. She received her BFA in illustration from Pratt Institute and is now thriving in Queens, New York! Growing up, she was surrounded by Mexican culture and tradition, where she learned about her Latina roots through her family and illustration. She loves using bright colors and vivid textures to showcase diversity and bring out excitement in her work. Visit her online at emmillustrations.com.

Reviews

"Ideal for any educator teaching listening skills or the science of birding, this book is also an inclusive tool perfect for a variety of content connections, including science and ELA." – *School Library Journal*

"The focus on bird calls is a fantastically fresh approach to imparting avian information, and Mia's detailed sensory experiences are particularly notable. . . . An unusual and enjoyable outing sure to inspire readers to experience the natural world in a new way." – *Booklist*

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