



EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Discussion questions and essay prompts paired with Common Core Learning Standards. Includes extension activities and reproducibles.

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www.elisastoneleahy.com

ABOUT THE BOOK

Perfect for fans of *Efrén Divided* and *A Good Kind of Trouble*, this luminous middle grade debut follows a tween girl navigating the devastating impact of ICE's looming presence on her family and community.

Seventh grader Wendy Toledo knows that black holes and immigration police have one thing in common: they can both make things disappear without a trace. When her family moves to a new all-American neighborhood, Wendy knows the plan: keep her head down, build a telescope that will win the science fair, and stay on her family's safe orbit.

But that's easier said than done when there's a woman hiding out from ICE agents in the church across the alley—and making Wendy's parents very nervous.

As bullying at school threatens Wendy's friendships and her hopes for the science fair, and her family's secrets start to unravel, Wendy finds herself caught in the middle of far too many gravitational pulls. When someone she loves is detained by ICE, Wendy must find the courage to set her own orbit—and maybe shift the paths of everyone around her.



Grades 4-8

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Elisa Stone Leahy is a Peruvian-American documentary filmmaker and children's author. She lives in Columbus, Ohio with her long-suffering partner, brilliant children, lazy cats and scruffy labradoodle. When she's not writing or working at the library, Elisa spends her energy on spontaneous bursts of artistic chaos and immigration activism. Her work with Edith Espinal's sanctuary team inspired her debut novel, *Tethered to Other Stars*. Find out more on her website, www.elisastoneleahy.com.

★ "A beautifully executed, character-driven tale of family, courage, resilience, and the meaning of what is right."

Kirkus (starred review)

★ "Debut author Leahy crafts a powerful meditation on the difficult choice between what one views as right vs. safe with resounding empathy and skill."

Publishers Weekly (starred review)

"Joins the growing list of fearless middle-grade fiction that trusts its readers' capacity for critical empathy."

Booklist

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Selection of questions to be used in a framework of tiered lesson delivery.

Discussion Questions	Common Core Learning Standards
<p>1. Wendy’s family moves into a new house at the beginning of the book. How is the house described? How does this set the mood for the opening of the story? Using evidence from the text, show how the state of the house and the events in the immigrant community evoke similar emotions.</p>	Reading Standards, Grade 7, RL 7.1, 7.2, 7.3
<p>2. At the beginning of chapter 8, Wendy thinks of the kids at school as balls of tin foil in a static electricity experiment. She was “skittering through the halls and classrooms with the other students, each of them drawing close to each other and then jumping away, trying to find their place.” Show examples in the text of kids who interact with each other, either drawing away or connecting throughout the story as they find their place.</p>	Reading Standards, Grade 7, RL 7.1, 7.2, 7.3
<p>3. The word “illegal” is used in reference to Luz in chapter 4, chapter 22, and in chapter 25, but Wendy’s response is different each time. Describe how Wendy’s perspective on that term changes throughout the book.</p>	Reading Standards, Grade 7, RL 7.1, 7.2, 7.3
<p>4. In chapter 10 Wendy defines the word parallax as it relates to astronomy. Explain what “parallax” means in your own words. What other ways does the word “parallax” connect with the themes of immigration and of justice in this story?</p>	Reading Standards, Grade 7, RL 7.4
<p>5. Choose one of the following examples from the text. Using context clues, write a definition for the underlined word. Consult reference materials (dictionary) and compare your definition to the reference definition of the word.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Wendy calmly pointed out that this entire house wasn’t up to code and maybe they shouldn’t have moved in if it wasn’t livable. She had to do <u>penance</u> for that comment by helping Mamá clean the secondhand stove.” (chapter 7)• “He was officially just Tom, like in the dusty Tom Sawyer book from the attic, a name brimming with <u>quaint</u> American boyhood.” (chapter 16)• “It was a nearly <u>imperceptible</u> movement, but Wendy felt it like the shifting of a planet.” (chapter 29)	Reading Standards, Grade 7, L 7.4

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Questions to demonstrate understanding and critical analysis of the text

Essay Questions	Common Core Learning Standards
<p>Essay Question 1: Dynamic characters experience growth and change throughout the story, whereas static characters stay the same. Choose a character other than Wendy and analyze their character arc. Write a thesis stating whether they are static or dynamic, then defend your statement. Organize your reasons clearly and cite evidence from the text. Include at least three separate moments in the story where the character's choices support your claim. End with a conclusion that clearly summarizes your argument.</p>	Reading Standards, Grade 7, W 7.1
<p>Essay Question 2: Read the description of the Toledo family's house from the beginning of the book. Read the scene in the epilogue. Why do you think the author chose to frame the story with these two scenes? How does the house change? How does this change reflect the themes of the book and the character arcs? Form a thesis explaining what the house symbolizes. Support your thesis by comparing and contrasting the two scenes, using evidence from the text. End with a conclusion reiterating the thesis.</p>	Reading Standards, Grade 7, W 7.1
<p>Essay Question 3: Etta has many qualities of a good friend—she is loyal, passionate and honest. But Etta and Wendy have a tense interaction on pages 118-122. Read the scene and think about how and why friends have conflict even if they care about each other. Using evidence from the text to support your thesis, explain what led to this moment of conflict. Begin with a thesis statement and end with a conclusion.</p>	Reading Standards, Grade 7, W 7.1
<p>Essay Question 4: Conflict can be internal (characters struggle with tension inside themselves) or external (characters struggle with forces outside themselves). Evaluate the different forms of conflict in this book. Is it primarily internal or external? Write a thesis answering this question. Use 3-4 examples from the text and reiterate your thesis in your conclusion sentence.</p>	Reading Standards, Grade 7, W 7.1

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS


A variety of engagement options for use in differentiated instruction

Pre-Reading Activities

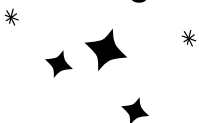
Watch the documentary *A Shelter for Edith* and the video of the TEDx talk given by Pastor Joel Miller about Edith Espinal's time in sanctuary (both found under *Educator Resources* on www.elisastoneleahy.com).



Discuss the meaning of the word "sanctuary." What kinds of sanctuary have you heard of before? What ideas do you have about what "immigration sanctuary" might mean?

Elisa Stone Leahy is also a  documentary filmmaker. Why do you think she chose to write a fictional story about sanctuary? What are the pros and cons of telling something through fiction versus non-fiction?

Look at the book cover. What emotional response does the image evoke? What do you infer about the character from this picture? Do you see other clues that might relate to the story? In your opinion, what is the meaning of the title?



After reading the book, follow up on these answers. Have any of them changed?

Extension Activities

Be a News Reporter



In the book, various news outlets report on the events surrounding Wendy's family. On your own, write a news report like one of the journalists might have published. Or in a small group, film a "Breaking News" video or present a live news broadcast to the class. Research and include background information about immigration that the readers or viewers may need.



Character Interviews

Work with a partner or in small groups to portray any character from the book you choose. Interview the character, asking in-depth questions about their thoughts and feelings throughout the story. This can be written, recorded or performed live.

Art Projects



Create a multi-media art project like the one K.K. makes in chapter 19, or create a mural like Etta and the other kids make in chapter 41.

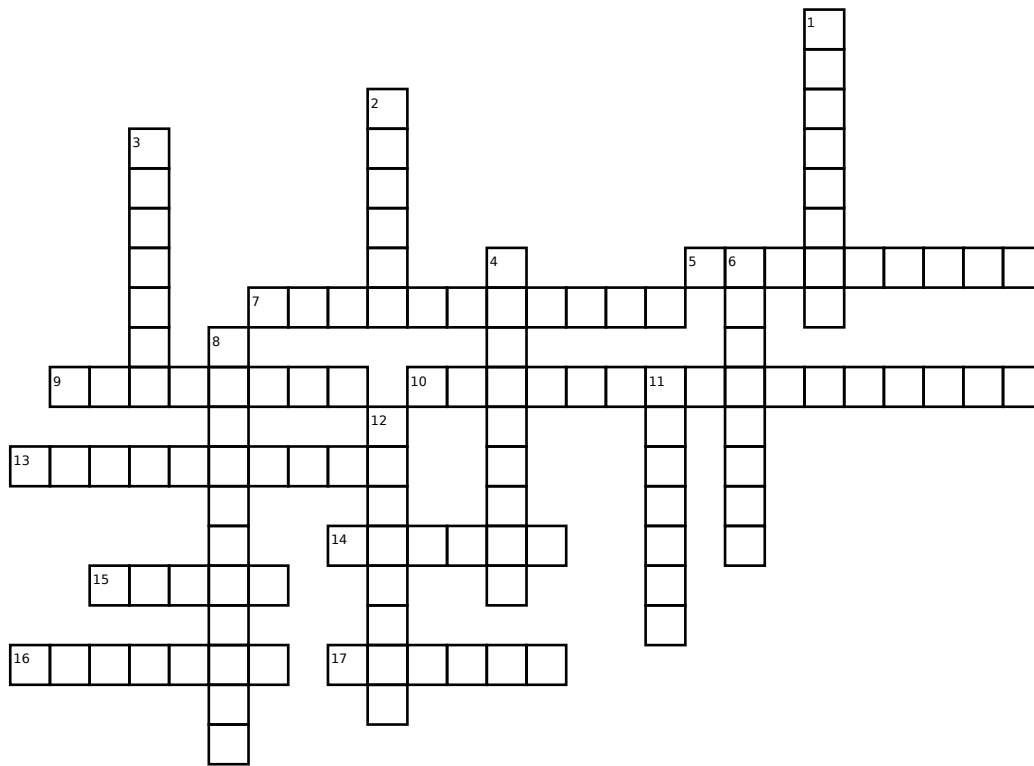
Science Projects



Find a science project that connects to a theme in the book, for example: parallax, gravity or orbits. (Helpful links can be found on Elisa's website under *Educator Resources*.)

VOCABULARY CROSSWORD

Reproducible activity for use in teaching *Tethered to Other Stars*



Down

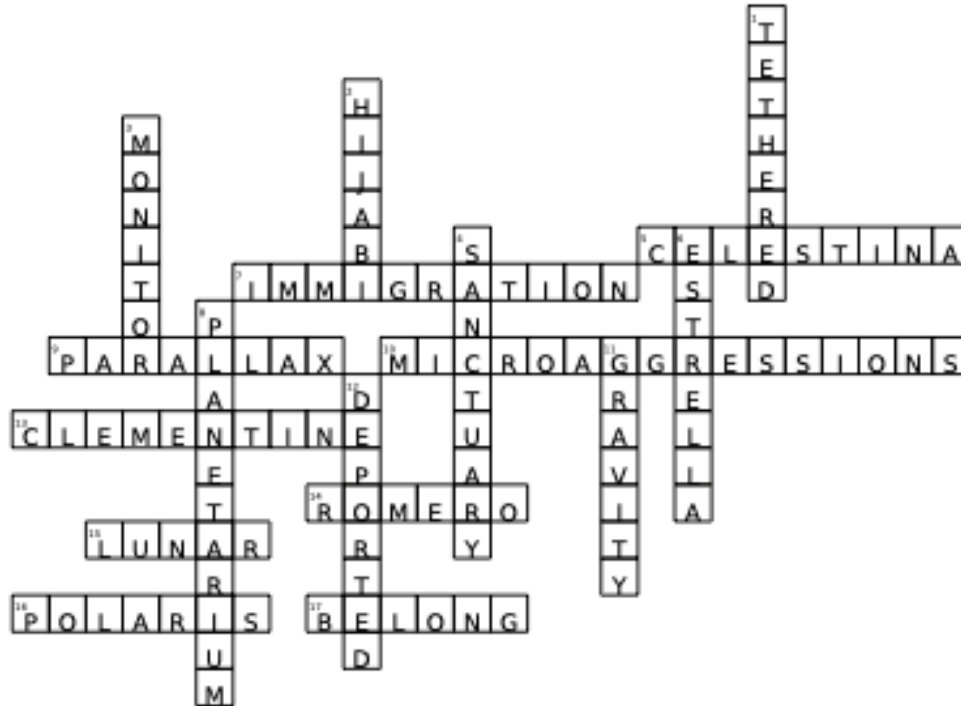
1. Connected or attached to something
2. Someone who wears a hijab, a headcovering often worn by Muslim women (chapter 13).
3. In order to track Luz, ICE makes her wear an ankle _____.
4. A safe place
6. Star in Spanish
8. Wendy hopes to get a junior internship at the Slettebak _____ (chapter 7).
11. A force that attracts an object to another physical body with mass.
12. Alicia's dad was _____ when ICE sent him back to the country he was born in (chapter 4).

Across

5. A name that means heavenly
7. _____ and Customs Enforcement, also called ICE or la migra.
9. Objects look different when viewed from different points in the universe.
10. Things people do or say to others about their identity that alone seem minor but can build up and become damaging (chapter 40).
13. Wendy's favorite fruit (chapter 15)
14. The priest who was killed in El Salvador after preaching against the government was named Oscar _____ (chapter 11).
15. Related to the moon, similar to the Spanish word for moon (chapter 23).
16. The North Star
17. The words Etta paints on the wall say "You _____".

ANSWER KEY

Teacher answer key for grading crossword activity



Down

1. Connected or attached to something
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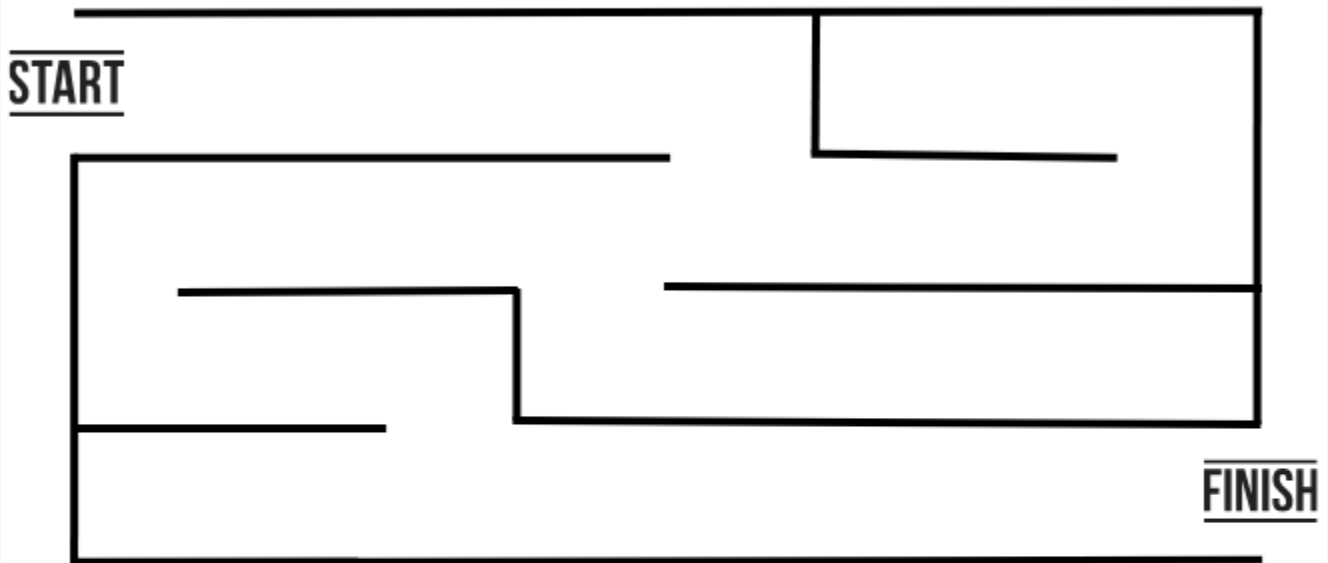
PERSPECTIVE SHIFT MAZE

Reproducible activity for use in teaching *Tethered to Other Stars*

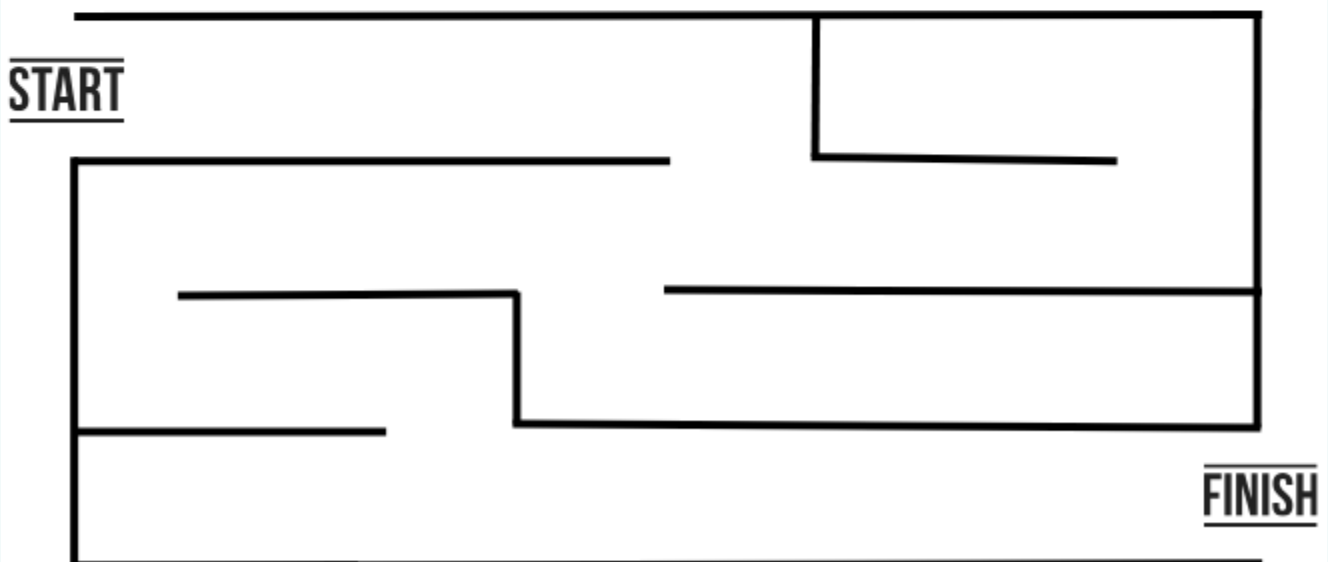
Time yourself completing the maze. Then have a partner hold a mirror so that you can see the maze in the reflection. Time yourself completing the maze by looking only in the mirror.

Are the times different? Why do you think that is?

Time without mirror _____



Time with mirror _____



Design your dream shoes

In the book *Tethered to Other Stars*, Wendy's new galaxy high tops have blue and purple swirls and stars. If you designed shoes based on something you loved, what would they look like?

