



## **Eight Days: A Story of Haiti**

*Edwidge Danticat , Alix Delinois (Illustrator)*

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Hope comes alive in this heartfelt and deeply resonating story.

While Junior is trapped for 8 days beneath his collapsed house after an earthquake, he uses his imagination for comfort. Drawing on beautiful, everyday-life memories, Junior paints a sparkling picture of Haiti for each of those days--flying kites with his best friend or racing his sister around St. Marc's Square--helping him through the tragedy until he is finally rescued.

Love and hope dance across each page--granting us a way to talk about resilience as a family, a classroom, or a friend.

## Eight Days: A Story of Haiti Details

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Author : Edwidge Danticat , Alix Delinois (Illustrator)

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## **From Reader Review Eight Days: A Story of Haiti for online ebook**

### **Jennifer Rayment says**

Mom's Note: As mentioned before, Jake has a hard time with books that deal with sadness so it always affects his reviews -- nothing against the talents of the author

Jake's Review: Mom this book is odd looking and I really don't get it. I did like that it was hopeful about the families that survived the earthquake, but I didn't like the fact that one of the kids died. Although I think it was nicely written for younger kids who probably won't realize that the other kid died. I don't like books like this because they are too serious and I really didn't like that a young boy died. This would be a good book for teachers to talk to us about though

Jake's Rating: 6/10

Mom's Review: A beautifully simple and subtle story of the power of imagination and of hope and resilience. I did however think the art work was a little too sophisticated for the suggested age. That is just a personal opinion and mostly based on my child's tastes. However, I do think this will be an award winner. It would be a fantastic addition to a classroom library where a teacher would have the ability to discuss Haiti and the earthquake with the children. I have a feeling though that unless there is some promotion of it in the classroom or the library, that the children will overlook it because of the sophisticated artwork. That being said it really is beautifully and sensitively done. You can really see the author and the illustrator's love and admiration for Haiti and its people.

Mom's Rating: 8.5/10

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### **Crista says**

Written in the wake of the 2010 earthquake that devastated Haiti, this beautifully illustrated story tells the tale of a small child who was trapped below the rubble for eight days. When asked what he did for so long in the rubble, he simply says that in his mind he played. He was able to take everyday things like playing marbles and singing in church and amplify them in his imagination. For example: on the fourth day, his solo was the best in the world. On the fifth day his friend, who was with him when his house collapsed, went to sleep and didn't wake up, so he cried. The gorgeous illustrations depict a life in Haiti that is simple and beautiful, to remind people of the way things were before the damage of the earthquake. What a great book about courage and strength to share with younger students.

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## **Linda says**

This book is not just about the earthquake, but about a little boy who is rescued—after 8 days! The author created a way to show Haiti as it was “before” the earthquake by having the boy tell what he did during the time he was trapped. He “played”, not truthfully, but he pretended he was playing. So, for example, on the first day, he and his friend Oscar (also trapped with him) flew kites and then started a huge back of marbles. The story moves page by page, telling the story that only imagination can create. The pictures help tell this story with bright colors and movement, just as I often imagine what Haiti must be like.

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## **Karen Arendt says**

A short picture book describing how a young boy imagined himself playing during the eight days he was buried under rubble after the earthquake in Haiti in 2010. The illustrations are full of bright colors and detailed. This title is suggested for the new Common Core Expeditionary ELA modules (5th grade). I do not see much physical survival in this book, though there is much of the survival of the human spirit.

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## **Doreen says**

A little boy is trapped under his house for eight days following the earthquake in Haiti, January 2010. With him is his friend, Oscar. To pass the time, they imagine that they are playing; flying kites, shooting marbles, playing hide-and-seek, etc. Sadly, on the fifth day, Oscar "...went to sleep, He never woke up."

The story does have a happy ending in which the little boy is found and rescued. It's a hopeful ending in the aftermath of this horrible natural disaster, but I think that Oscar's death is a bit much for a child to face. If a parent reads this book with the child, then it's an opportunity to open a dialogue about friendship, loss, and hope. A child under the age of thirteen should not read this alone.

As an adult reading the book, I realize that the people of Haiti, especially the children, had no choice but to deal with the death and destruction caused by the earthquake. No one is ever truly prepared for such a disaster. This book, with its wonderful illustrations, is certainly a kind and tender way to communicate a sad and serious topic to youngsters.

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## **Tricia says**

I explained a couple of pages into the book that the main character was relying on his imagination as he was trapped in the rubble. My 10 yo got it once I said that, but the 7 yo was still confused about it at the end. He also didn't understand about the friend dying, but that bothers me less than the fact that he just didn't get the main story telling device being used.

On the other hand, a friend of mine who teaches in Haiti and lived through the quake was very moved by this. I respect her opinion, but didn't find it as powerful as she did. Perhaps it resonates most with those who

can relate to the experience.

I preferred Hope For Haiti, by Jesse Joshua Watson, but I can't seem to find it listed in goodreads. Maybe the problem is in the iPod app?

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### **Esti says**

Eight Days: A Story of Haiti is a collaboration between lauded writer Edwidge Danticat and illustrator Alix Delinois that was published on the heels of the deadly earthquake that struck Haiti in 2010. The story is narrated by Junior, a young boy who was trapped in the ruins of his home for eight days, imagining a different happy scenario for what he would have been doing each day. Though his friend Oscar, with whom he was trapped, does not survive the disaster, Junior is reunited with his parents and sister at the end. The saturated, lovingly painted illustrations give a vivid depiction of life in Haiti before the earthquake, and make a very simple and sad story into an engaging read. The language of the book is simple and clear, and, though it may be a bit dense for very young readers, will capture the attention of children old enough to be aware of the events in Haiti. There is little background information, so Junior's circumstances will have to be explained either by a news story or by a parent. The sadness of the story and circumstances are, however, softened by the overall optimism and the happy ending of the book. Recommended for ages 7 to 11.

Tags: Haiti, imagination, tragedy, family, picture book, hope, grades 1 to 3

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### **Krista the Krazy Kataloguer says**

Junior, a 7-year-old Haitian boy, relates how he passed the time remembering good times he had with his family and friends whilst waiting for eight days to be rescued from under the rubble of his house after an earthquake. Based on the true story of the earthquake of January 12, 2010, Danticat focuses away from the fear and death and destruction and toward life. Junior keeps up his courage by remembering all the fun Haitian children have growing up. Danticat writes at the end of the book of how the earthquake affected her, having close relatives there herself. The illustrations are colorful, like Haiti, but I wasn't happy with how the illustrator drew faces. The children looked like kids with adult faces/heads half the time. Nevertheless, it was an interesting story, though not really informative about the earthquake itself.

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### **Liz Murray says**

A subtle yet powerful story that touches on the devastation of the 2010 earthquake. At a first glance I wasn't sure what was going on but on rereading I understood too well. I don't think this could be read on its own without pertinent discussion. It's certainly not an end of the day read aloud but I can see it being read to children as young as four or five if there's a personal connection to the story. Edwidge Danticat has such a beautiful speaking voice that make her work all the more appealing to me. She is soft spoken yet deals some hard blows. You couldn't call this story bittersweet but it does end happily with a tragic undercurrent.

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## **L13F\_Jana Wilkening says**

This is another gorgeously illustrated book that could work with early primary all the way through middle school. The colors bring the country of Haiti to life. This book tells the story of a young boy who is trapped under his house during the earthquake. He spends 8 days under the house using his imagination to survive the horrific conditions. The death of his friend Oscar (who is under the house with him) is devastating. I loved the book...until I realized it was not a true story. I do think this might represent how many children survived (using imagination), but I feel a true account would have been much more memorable.

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## **Esther Storrie says**

Eight Days: a Story of Haiti by acclaimed Haitian author Edwidge Danticat tells the story of Junior, a young boy trapped under the rubble of his house following the devastating earthquake on January 12, 2010. Junior and his friend Oscar use their imaginations to occupy themselves while they are buried, until, on the fifth day, Oscar goes to sleep and never wakes up. Junior is alone for three more days, but is finally rescued and reunited with his parents and sister.

Danticat, and illustrator Alix Delinois, are both Haitian natives, and their love for their country comes through strongly in this beautifully written and illustrated book. By focusing on Junior's imaginings, the author and illustrator are able to capture the beauty of Haiti before the quake. The bright colors of the children's clothes against the blue sky truly evoke a tropical locale, and the joy of the children's daily life at school, church, and home comes through clearly. The story is very poignant too, as readers ponder how brave Junior had to be to survive under the rubble for eight days, even as his best friend dies. It is a sad story, but a gentle one, and would be a good way to discuss the disaster with young children.

The book could be used with older children as well, and would be a good place for a critical literacy discussion about what is missing from the story. For example, Junior's life before the earthquake is portrayed as happy and carefree. There is no allusion to the extreme poverty facing many people in Haiti, and the way that poverty led to far more death and destruction in Port-au-Prince than similar earthquakes did in places like Japan. There is also no reference to the continuing problems in Haiti, and the problems with the rebuilding efforts.

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## **Dora says**

Eight Days: A Story of Haiti is a 2011 Americas Commended Title. It is about a boy who is trapped after the earthquake. During the eight days that he is trapped, he lives through his memories of his family, friends, and culture. The vibrant illustrations remind the reader of the happy moments that the boy spent during his life in Haiti. Recommended for any age and can be paired with informational text about the Haiti earthquake.

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## **Vamos a Leer says**

Eight Days, A Story of Haiti tells the story of a young boy who is trapped under his house for eight long days following Haiti's 2010 earthquake. In order to keep his spirits high and make the time pass, he daydreams of

running and playing in the sunshine, scenes which have been beautifully illustrated by Delinois to “reflect the beauty of Haitian life before the earthquake, and what is possible for the future.” Despite living through a terrifying experience, the child protagonist embodies hope and potential.

Danticat is originally from Haiti and frequently writes children’s, young adult and adult books on themes of Haiti or Haitian-Americans. Many of Danticat’s stories often include autobiographical elements, as well as contemporary, sociopolitical information about Haiti. Thus, Danticat’s *Eight Days, A Story of Haiti*, as well as many of her other books, would be a perfect way to teach a lesson on Haiti’s 2010 earthquake, or other more current events and conditions in Haiti.

At the back of *Eight Days, A Story of Haiti*, Danticat includes a note from the author where she explains how she found out about Haiti’s earthquake on January 12, 2010, including her frantic worries for friends and family back home, and the concern of her two young daughters, who visited Haiti every year of their young lives. At this moment, Danticat reflects on the differing versions of Haiti that she and her daughters will remember, one before the earthquake and one after. This story beautifully and tragically captures both perspectives.

Danticat’s author’s note, as well as the story itself, portrays the magic and promise of young children, and the tragedy of their potential cut short:

“They are everywhere, Haiti’s precious and beautiful children. You see them on rooftops—where there are rooftops—flying kites. You see them gathered in small groups on the ground—where the ground is not muddy—playing marbles. You see them link hands and run in a circle while singing the song associated with the won, the Haitian equivalent of ring-around-the-rosy. You see them twirl a bicycle wheel with a bent rope hanger, and in that act you can see the dream of one day actually driving the rest of the bike, or a motorcycle, a car, or an airplane.”

These joyful acts of play are described and illustrated on each page of Danticat’s story, as the male protagonist waits to be rescued from the rubble and envisions Haiti before the earthquake.

The illustration on the first page of the book shows the young boy after having been pulled out of the rubble, being interviewed by foreign reporters and television crew, many of whom are Caucasian. This calls attention to the international reaction that Haiti’s 2010 earthquake prompted, and particularly to the predominance of Western interventions. For older students, this could inspire a discussion about the implications of outside interventions.

After being interviewed by reporters, the protagonist tells his story through a first-person narration, describing what happened on each day that he was trapped. This format contributes to the child protagonist’s agency, despite his helpless situation, as he recounts his own experience. Additionally, this narrative timeline, starting in the present and reflecting on the past, also sets a tone of nostalgia for the rest of the story, nostalgia for a Haiti before the earthquake.

As the story progresses, readers will notice a striking juxtaposition between the bright, sunny images and the devastating contextual reality behind them. The narration uses a string of euphemisms for the terrifying experience that the unnamed protagonist endured. For example, on the second day, the protagonist and his friend, Oscar, who is trapped under the house with him play hide and seek with the protagonist’s family: “When they came close to finding us, Oscar and I popped up and yelled, ‘Alarive!’ Surprise!” The image of playing hide and seek serves as a symbol for the two boys who had to scream and yell waiting and hoping for rescue workers to find them, and for their family who was frantically searching. On the sixth day, the

protagonist runs and plays in the rain with his sister catching rain water in his mouth; in the real world, catching trickles of rain water while trapped enabled him to survive eight days without food or water. These euphemisms and symbols not only add sophistication to the narration, but may also help young readers and students ease into these more difficult topics.

Ultimately, Danticat's unnamed protagonist represents all of Haiti's children who were affected by the earthquake. Her first-person narration through the perspective of a child also shows the infinite hope and magic of a child's imagination.

Although this book is best for grades K-3, many of its topics, themes and narrative devices could be interesting for older students as well.

For access to the full review and additional resources, check out our *Vamos a Leer* blog at [teachinglatinamericathroughliterature.com](http://teachinglatinamericathroughliterature.com)

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### **Tami says**

*Eight Days* is inspired by the happenings during the Haitian earthquake. The story itself is inspiring. Junior, an eight year old boy, is buried alive underneath his house during the earthquake. Alone and without food and water the little boy was trapped for eight days. How absolutely terrifying!

How did the little boy survive? He imagined playing, singing, and doing all the things he loved to do. Then, on the eighth day, he was rescued.

*Eight Days* is definitely not a book for small children. Nonetheless, many children experienced the worry of family and friends who did experience the earthquake first hand. For these children, Junior shows them that courage, faith, and imagination can make all the difference.

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### **Joanne says**

I absolutely loved this book. It actually was sad, and the little boy even lost his friend but the book still intruded a peaceful mind to something devastating. I enjoyed the way the author incorporated enriched culture in subtle ways. For instance, the little boy imagines riding his bike with his sister as many kids of different cultures do, but he imagines them riding bikes next to a famous statue, Neg Mewon, which is across from the Presidential Palace. I appreciate the way the book integrated culture but also made it relatable

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