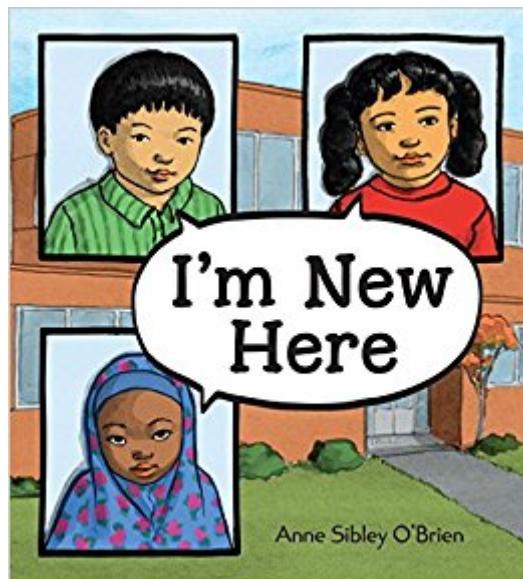


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# I'm New Here



## Synopsis

Three students are immigrants from Guatemala, Korea, and Somalia and have trouble speaking, writing, and sharing ideas in English in their new American elementary school. Through self-determination and with encouragement from their peers and teachers, the students learn to feel confident and comfortable in their new school without losing a sense of their home country, language, and identity. Young readers from all backgrounds will appreciate this touching story about the assimilation of three immigrant students in a supportive school community. Anne Sibley O'Brien is one of the founders of I'm Your Neighbor, an organization that promotes children's literature featuring "new arrival" cultures. As the rate of immigration to the United States increases, topics related to immigration are increasingly more important in the classroom and home. I'm New Here demonstrates how our global community can work together and build a home for all.

## Book Information

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Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 11 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #44,357 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #113 in Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Fiction #238 in Children's Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > New Experiences #576 in Children's Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > School

Age Range: 5 - 8 years

Grade Level: Kindergarten - 3

## Customer Reviews

K-Gr 2 "Being the new student in a classroom is difficult enough, but when the child comes from another culture and speaks a different language, it can be extremely stressful and lonely. Three youngsters enter a new schoolâ "Maria from Guatemala, Jin from Korea, and Fatimah from Somaliaâ "and each one experiences the feeling of not fitting in. They slowly learn to find ways to

assimilate and, in fact, to shine as their inclusion in the classroom enriches the lives of the other children. Maria asks to join a group playing soccer, Jin teaches a fellow student some words written in Korean, and Fatimah gains enough confidence to share her artwork with the group. Brightly hued watercolors on stark white backgrounds show the children's adjustment to the new situation and their classmates' ready acceptance. "A Note from the Author" page includes a list of recommended readings on the same subject. **VERDICT** The title would be useful in sparking a discussion, and the simple text makes it a good choice for beginning readers.â "Maryann H. Owen, Children's Literature Specialist, Mt. Pleasant, WI

\*Readers walk in the shoes of three students struggling after immigrating to the United StatesReaders meet Maria, from Guatemala, Jin, a South Korean boy, and Fatimah, a Somali girl who wears the hijab. Oâ ™Brien fosters empathy by portraying only one challenge each must overcome rather than overwhelming readers with many. Maria struggles with the language. Though back home, â œOur voices flowed like water and flew between us like birds,â • the sounds of English elude her. Clever, phonetically spelled dialogue balloons bring home to readers how foreign English sounds to Maria. For Jin, writing is the trouble; the scribbles of American letters close the door to the wonderful world of stories. Fatimahâ ™s challenge is abstract: she cannot find her place in this new classroom. Gradually, each child begins to bridge the gapâ "soccer, stories and shared words, artworkâ "and feel like part of a community. Oâ ™Brienâ ™s watercolor-and-digital illustrations masterfully use perspective, white space, and the contrast between the children â œback homeâ • and in their new settings to highlight the transition from outsider to friend. Other diverse students fill the classrooms, including a child in a wheelchair. An authorâ ™s note tells Oâ ™Brienâ ™s own immigrant story, how difficult the transition is, the reasons families might emigrate, and how readers might help.Whether readers are new themselves or meeting those who are new, there are lessons to be learned here about perseverance, bravery, and inclusion, and Oâ ™Brienâ ™s lessons are heartfelt and poetically rendered.-Kirkus Reviews, \*starred reviewBeing the new student in a classroom is difficult enough, but when the child comes from another culture and speaks a different language, it can be extremely stressful and lonely. Three youngsters enter a new schoolâ "Maria from Guatemala, Jin from Korea, and Fatimah from Somaliaâ "and each one experiences the feeling of not fitting in. They slowly learn to find ways to assimilate and, in fact, to shine as their inclusion in the classroom enriches the lives of the other children. Maria asks to join a group playing soccer, Jin teaches a fellow student some words written in Korean, and Fatimah gains enough confidence to share her artwork with the group. Brightly hued

watercolors on stark white backgrounds show the children's adjustment to the new situation and their classmates' ready acceptance. A Note from the Author • page includes a list of recommended readings on the same subject. VERDICT The title would be useful in sparking a discussion, and the simple text makes it a good choice for beginning readers.-School Library Journal

This well-conceived, thoughtful picture book traces the first day at a new school for three children with very different experiences of adjusting, linguistically and culturally. "Back home I knew the language," says Maria, remembering her days of playing fútbol (American soccer) with her friends. "Here there are new words. I can't understand them." Anne Sibley O'Brien (The Legend of Hong Kil Dong) shows Maria on the sidelines of her new school hearing alien sounds while watching others play ("wun too"; "Mai tern," say the thought balloons). Jin is confronted with an entirely new alphabet: "Back home I could read and write," he says. "I shaped the letters and stacked them like blocks into words." As with Maria's example, Sibley O'Brien depicts Jin's experience in his homeland (Korea) on the left, and the scene in his new school on the right, with letters that "lie on the page like scribbles and scratches." Fatimah, wearing a hijab, says, "Here there are new ways.... I cannot find my place." But when her teacher asks the students to make drawings of life in their community, Fatimah volunteers to show her picture and connects with a classmate. Jin also makes a friend, and Maria finds her way through soccer. Because Sibley O'Brien spotlights three examples, no child will feel singled out. She paves the way for teachers and parents to share this with children both as a way of preparing a new student, and as a way to welcome a classmate who may share this trio's predicament.-Shelf Awareness

Based on her own experiences living in another country as a young child, Sibley shows the challenges of three new American students as they navigate their first day of school. Maria, from Guatemala, struggles with English, but her love of soccer enables her to make new friends. Writing is difficult for Jin, from South Korea, but he finds that sharing his language with another student helps him unlock his stories. Meanwhile, Fatimah, from Somalia, is having trouble fitting in and is afraid of making mistakes. Encouraged by a classmate, she uses drawing as a way to connect her two cultures. The simplicity of the narrative combined with vibrant watercolor artwork depicting a wide range of diversity results in a powerful message of empathy for the immigrant experience. Additionally, an author's note explains why some families emigrate and how readers can help new Americans transition and provides a link to the I'm Your Neighbor project, which promotes children's literature featuring new arrivals. -Booklist

This book is serving as an incredible bridge between my American born children and their newest friends, recently arrived from Sudan. I'M NEW HERE allows all of us talk about what it's like to be

new, how to bring all of your stories with you wherever you go in life, and how to find your own place in a sea of unfamiliarity. This book is a life-saver for children everywhere who have just arrived and don't yet feel like they belong. What a wonderful gift for our newest neighbors to discover their own experience as told through the pages of a picture book. And an equally rewarding read for children who need to make room for new friends. A treasure for the classroom and home book shelf as well.

This shows young children how it feels to be new in America. It is so nice as it shows both viewpoints --- new student from another country, and the class. Jin, Fatimah, and Maria move from different countries to be confused and not feel like they fit in anymore. "Back home, I was part of the class. I knew just what to do. I fit in like one of the many stars in the night sky." The story is simple and profound. There are similes and metaphors that help explain the feelings of the children. The audio version has several voices, different languages, and impacts the story in a wonderful way.

I bought this book for my son's class. He goes to an international school in Mexico where there are only 5 foreigners in a grade of 100. It helped my son talk about his experience being the new kid. And his teacher said he helped the discussion in the classroom too. She liked it so much she shared it with other teachers in the school! Really captures the experience of a kid moving to a new culture/country.

Absolutely LOVE this story!! Really helped my students remember what it was like when they were new, when we got a few newcomer students recently. AND the students LOVE seeing people that look like them in books. Highly recommended!!

I read it to a recent 9 year old immigrant and she said that she felt like the children in the story.

This could be a read aloud in the primary grades for classes that are going to have a new classmate from another country or as part of an integrated unit of study on immigration. I'm not sure the new classmate would understand the book - if they are in the early stages of learning English, but he or she might appreciate the illustrations which clearly show how unfamiliar U.S. schools may feel to a foreign student. The illustrations also show the transition - how the new student begins to find his/her place in the classroom - MAINLY due to the students finding ways to welcome him/her into the environment. Worthy of discussion would be two-page spreads in the center of the book--on the left the new student is remembering his/her old school experiences and on the left, the illustration

reveals the unfamiliar situation in the new school. An important main idea-- not stated explicitly in the text-- is that the other students in the classroom are the ones who will make the difference in this new student's experience. There's lots of room for small group discussions and writing in response to this idea. There's lots of potential for use in the classroom. I'd also recommend to teachers working with small groups of new students from foreign countries, EL students or teachers working with small groups of new and mainstream students. As noted in another review - for the child's memory of Guatemala - playing soccer with her friends and saying "orale" - this does appear to be a Mexican exclamation versus Guatemalan. That said - I'd be interested to hear what readers who are native to Korea and Somalia think of the portrayal of these children.

It's not easy being the new kid in class. All eyes watch you. Your newness breaks up the humdrum of the classroom routine. Now imagine being new in a place where you don't understand the language. That is the challenge for three students in I'm New Here. Maria is from Guatemala. Recess in her old home meant free flowing conversations. Now she is overwhelmed by strange sounds. Jin has come from Korea. He loved writing stories in his native land. Writing in English is a challenge. The symbols are now letters instead of pictures. Fatimah, from Somalia, was a great fit in her old class. She has to learn different routines and ways in her new class. Loneliness and confusion are some of the feelings facing these students. The nice thing about kids is that they can make all sorts of connections. Through art, reading, and soccer, these students make new friends. What a great book to share at the beginning of the year! I have three students who are new to our school and will be sharing it. Being aware of the difficulty of being new will help the rest of the class to make friends. I'm New Here would also be a good mentor text when talking about immigration. Pair this with the wonderful wordless book Here I Am which also focuses on the theme of being new from another country. I'm New Here is a valuable resource for building a community in your classroom.

Given that this book covers the experiences of three different children, I feel this would have worked better if it was a bit longer than the standard 32 page picture book. Each child has their own challenge to overcome, and they do so, but an extra page or two for each would have really developed things. I do like that we get more than one immigrant experience, however. Not only does this increase the likelihood that a child will be able to identify with one of the characters, but it also tells other students that there are many ways to be different. Of course, this book is most likely to be used in the latter case, and not the former, given that it's already in English (though, of course,

plenty of new immigrant children will already be multi-lingual). Overall, it's a good pick for a classroom in general, but if you're specifically picking a book to help kids learn about of prepare for their new classmate, make sure this is going to connect well in their heads.

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