

The Arabic Quilt: An Immigrant Story

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Identities & Themes

- South Asian/Middle Eastern American
- Immigration/Migration
- EL/Language barrier
- Feelings
- Community
- Identity affirmation
- Identity safety
- School success

Teacher Reflection Questions

1. What experiences did you have growing up with being new or an outsider? What did you learn about yourself and others from those experiences?
2. What messages did you receive about immigrants when you were a child? What messages are your students getting?
3. How can you learn the stories of students in your classroom so that each child feels seen and valued in all of who they are?

Background Information for Teacher

This book offers insights into the challenge of fitting in as a new immigrant. Kanzi experiences many things that are common to immigrant children, i.e., not wanting to eat their traditional cultural foods at school or not speaking their native language in front of others. Many children can relate to the fear that comes with being new or being an outsider, and this story helps create empathy, understanding, and an opportunity for action to create community and belonging.

This book also shows the bias that exists around English language learners and being bi/multilingual. One character, Molly, says, “Who cares about Arabic? We live in America. My mom says we should only speak English.” It is important to consider your response to your own students who might say or think similar things, which may be hurtful to their peers. The book provides a positive example of how to show respect for and support children’s home cultures and languages in order to dispel such biases and stereotypes.

See the back of the book for a **Glossary of Arabic words**. For more information, see the **Immigration/Migration Primer**.

Anti-Bias Education Tenets

- ▣ Empathy & Understanding
- ▣ Healthy Complex Identities
- ▣ Respect Across Differences
- ▣ Notice, Name, & Reject Bias
- ▣ Responsiveness & Action

Social-Emotional Learning Competencies

- ▣ Self-Awareness
- ▣ Self-Management
- ▣ Social Awareness
- ▣ Responsible Decision Making
- ▣ Relationship Skills

Read this to the students before reading the book:

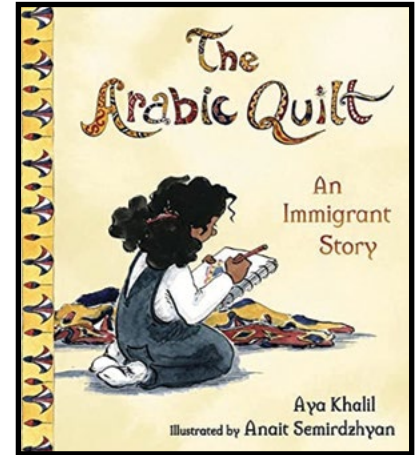
It's the first day of a new American school for Kanzi, who recently moved from Egypt, and she is nervous about fitting in. Forgetting her lunch at home, Kanzi's mom brings her a traditional Egyptian sandwich and speaks to her in Arabic, which embarrasses Kanzi and draws snickers from her classmates. Kanzi takes comfort in the beautiful Egyptian quilt that her grandmother gave her before she moved to America. Listen to learn how the quilt helps bring understanding of differences and connection to her class.

Discussion Questions (essential questions bolded)

1. Why is Teita's quilt so special to Kanzi?
2. **How does Kanzi feel about her Egyptian culture and Arabic language when she is at home?**
3. **How does she feel about those things when she is at school? Why do you think her feelings change from home to school?**
4. **What kinds of things does Kanzi do in order to fit in and not be different at school?**
5. How does Mrs. Haugen, the teacher, support Kanzi?
6. **What lessons do Molly and her classmates learn about Arabic and the importance of other languages?**
7. What lessons does Kanzi learn about herself and her culture and language?
8. **How can we celebrate the different home cultures and languages of each person in the class?**

Journal Prompts & Extension Activities

1. Write about a time when you:
 - Felt nervous about being new to something
 - Felt like an outsider
 - Were proud of your family's home culture, language, or traditions.
2. Using Kanzi's poem as inspiration, write a poem about something that is important or meaningful to you.
3. **Classroom Quilt:** Create a quilt for your classroom that is similar to the Arabic quilt. Have each person write their name in English on a square piece of paper. If English isn't their first language, give them the option of writing their name in their native language. Students can decorate the rest of the paper with images and words that describe and represent them. Put the squares together and display as a patchwork quilt.



Literacy Connections

- Realistic fiction
- Identify details in the text
- Compare and contrast events
- Compare and contrast characters
- Identify theme or main message
- Describe setting
- Describe characters/
Character development
- Character point of view
- Use illustrations/pictures/
photos to gain information
- Make predictions
- Make inferences
- Make text connections (to
self, text, the world)
- Describe major plot events
- Sequence events
- Vocabulary in context