

I'm New Here

by Anne Sibley O'Brien

Identities & Themes

- Feelings
- Friendship
- Community
- Identity affirmation
- Identity safety
- School success
- General racial/ethnic diversity
- Black/African American
- Latinx/e/o/a
- East/Southeast Asian American
- Bi/Multiracial identity or relationships
- Immigration/Migration
- English Language Learner/Language barrier
- Families separated

Teacher Reflection Questions

1. Were you ever the “new kid” or someone who didn’t immediately fit in?
2. What opportunities can you give your students to talk about differences like religion, culture, clothing, and language?
3. What visuals can you add to your classroom so that students can see themselves and each others’ differences every day in affirming ways?

Background Information for Teacher

Children who are immigrants, refugees, or new to the class or community can see themselves reflected in this book. Feeling a sense of belonging is key to a student’s ability to learn. New students, especially those who are learning a new language and adjusting to a new culture, can feel isolated. It is helpful for all children to understand how isolating it can be to be a new student. Classrooms focused on empathy and belonging help students find ways to build friendships across differences. By sharing the challenges faced by the students in this book, the class can discuss ways to make everyone feel welcome, and new students can feel supported and share their experiences.

See also the **Immigration/Migration Primer** in this guide.

Anti-Bias Education Tenets

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

Social-Emotional Learning

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

Read this to the students before reading the book:

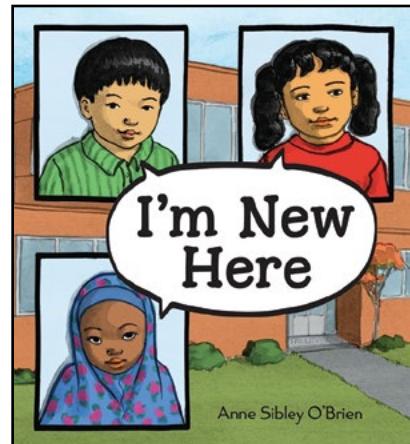
We're going to read a story about three children who recently moved to the United States from other countries. The story is about how each of them must start going to new schools. See if you can tell how they are feeling at the beginning of the book and how it changes throughout the story.

Discussion Questions (essential questions bolded)

1. Maria, Jin, and Fatimah are all new students. When you look at their faces in the first few pages of the book, how do you think they feel about starting at their new schools?
2. What do they miss about their old schools and countries?
3. What is hard for them at their new schools?
4. **What do you think it would be like for you if you changed schools or moved to another country?**
5. What are some of the feelings Maria, Jin, and Fatimah expressed at the beginning of the book? When have you had those feelings?
6. **What happens to Maria, Jin, and Fatimah that helps them feel good about their new schools?**
7. How do other students help Maria, Jin, and Fatimah? What did they do to include them?
8. **What things can you do in the classroom or on the playground to be kind to new students?**
9. Look at the pictures of Maria, Jin, and Fatimah at the beginning of the book. Then look at the pictures of them at the end of the book. What is different? What do these changes tell us?

Journal Prompts & Extension Activities

1. All students sometimes feel alone, confused, or sad. Ask students what has helped them feel better when they feel this way. They can write or draw about a time when they felt one of these emotions.
2. Ask students what they think a new student to the class needs to know about how to be successful in this classroom/school. Brainstorm a list of routines and rules (spoken and unspoken) any new student should know. Have kids role play how they would teach a rule or routine to someone new. This is a good review activity for all students to help them better understand and practice following classroom and school rules and routines.



Literacy Connections

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