

Home at Last

by Vera B. Williams, illustrated by Chris Raschka

Identities & Themes

- White/European American
- Family structure: Same-gender relationships, Adoption/foster care
- Families separated
- Grief/loss
- Feelings
- Identity safety

Teacher Reflection Questions

1. How are the unique needs of children who are in foster care or adopted met in your classroom and school?
2. How are diverse family structures like the one in the book welcomed and affirmed in your classroom and school?
3. How can you empower your students to embrace these identities and lived experiences and support each other in the classroom?

Background Information for Teacher

Before you read this book to the class, be aware of any students who may have experienced or are experiencing foster care, as this book could be triggering for some children.

The adoption of an older child by two dads presents a family structure that may be different for some of your students. This book is important to read because it normalizes these differences and provides a much-needed mirror for children who are adopted and for children who have same-gender parents. It is also a great book for discussing change/transitions, separation anxiety, and coping skills.

See also the **Diverse Family Structures 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 Competencies

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

Read this to the students before reading the book:

Home At Last is about a boy named Lester who finally gets to start his new life with Daddy Albert, Daddy Rich, and their dog, Wincka, after waiting almost a year for his adoption to be finalized. Listen to find out how the transition to being a new family goes and how Lester finally learns to feel home at last.

Discussion Questions (essential questions bolded)

1. Why was the little blue suitcase with the action figures so important to Lester?
2. Why did Lester want to sleep in his parents' bed every night? Why didn't he tell his parents what he wanted?
3. What happened to Lester before he came to live with his Daddy Albert and Daddy Rich?
4. Why didn't his parents let him sleep in their bed? On what occasions would Lester be allowed in their bed?
5. **Do you think that the parents should have let Lester sleep in their bed at night with them? Why or why not?**
6. What were some of the differences between Daddy Albert and Daddy Rich?
7. What do you think the parents would or should have done if Wincka had not decided to sleep with Lester in his bed?
8. What helped Lester finally feel home at last?

Journal Prompts & Extension Activities

1. Lester and his dads had to wait a whole year for the adoption to be finalized. Write about a time when you had to wait a long time for something really important to happen. What emotions and thoughts did you have during your waiting period? How did you handle the anticipation? Was the event or moment as significant as you thought it would be?
2. What makes you feel at home? Tap into your senses, and write about the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches that help you feel at home.
3. **I Can Be Calm and Joyful Journal:** Sometimes waiting and being patient is a difficult thing to do. Having an "I can be calm and joyful" journal can help, calm, distract, and comfort during difficult emotional journeys. Have students take three pages of paper (or use three pages in their AmazeWorks journal) and create the following, making sure to label each page accordingly.
 - Calm Images & Breath – Have students draw or cut out images to make a collage that makes them smile feel calm. Ask them to practice breathing in for 3-5 counts and exhale the same as they look at their collage.
 - Calm Thoughts & Breath – Have students write inspirational phrases or quotes that they can say in between calming, centering breaths when trying to self-regulate and calm their mind.
 - Memories of Joy & Breath – Draw a picture or retell the stories of memories that bring them joy when they think about them.



Literacy Connections

- Realistic fiction
- Identify details in the text
- Compare and contrast events
- Compare and contrast settings
- 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