I’m New Here

Picture Books about Immigrants and Refugees

Aylesworth, Jim. My Grandfather’s Coat. An immigrant tailor’s hand-sewn coat is worn to tatters and then recycled through the years into a jacket, a vest, a tie, a toy for his great-grandson, and finally...a story.

Buitrago, Jairo. Two White Rabbits. A girl describes the sights she sees as she journeys north toward the U.S. with Papá—traveling on train roofs, avoiding soldiers, counting the clouds in the sky, searching for a better life.

Coy, John. Their Great Gift. Lyrical text and beautiful photos explore the dreams, sacrifices, and hopes of a diverse group of new Americans. (J 305.906912 COY)

Diaz, Junot. Islandborn. When Ms. Obi asks the class to draw their home countries, Lola is stumped; she can’t remember the Island, which she left as a baby. Asking family and friends to share memories, she begins to form a picture of her homeland and understand her own identity.

Farish, Terry. Joseph’s Big Ride. Joseph lives in a Kenyan refugee camp, where he longs to ride a bicycle. When he and Mama move to America, everything is unfamiliar, until he spies a red bike...and meets its smiling owner.

Gay, Maire-Louise. Mustafa. A boy still dreams about the war-torn country he left with his family and feels invisible in his new home, but when he goes to a nearby park he finds unexpected wonders including teacup-shaped flowers, magical orange leaves, and a new friend.

Kheiriyeh, Rashin. Saffron Ice Cream. Excited about her first trip to Coney Island, Rashin ponders the differences between visiting the beach in America and in her native Iran. Though she misses her favorite ice cream, there are plenty of discoveries to make...even a new friend.

Medina, Meg. Mango, Abuela, and Me. When Mia’s far-away grandmother comes to live with Mia and her parents in the city, everyone has to adjust, but Abuela learns English and Mia learns Spanish with the help of a parrot named Mango.

Morales, Yuyi. Dreamers. After immigrating from Mexico to the U.S., Morales and her young son felt lonely and unsure until they found a place “Unbelievable. Surprising. Unimaginable”—the public library—and “Books became our lives.” (818.603 MORA)

O’Brien, Anne Sibley. I’m New Here. Three children from other countries all feel like outsiders after starting at a new school, but gradually find ways to adjust—and make new friends. Someone New tells the same story from the perspectives of their classmates.

Phi, Bao. A Different Pond. During an early morning trip to a Minnesota lake to catch fish for their dinner, a hardworking father tells his son about fishing in a far-distant pond and his life as boy in Vietnam.

Polacco, Patricia. The Keeping Quilt. Hand-sewn from pieces of Gramma Anna’s clothing, an heirloom quilt is passed down through four generations of an immigrant Jewish family and used to celebrate important days.

Ruurs, Margriet. Stepping Stones. Text in both English and Arabic and expressive stone collage artwork recount a family’s life in a peaceful Syrian village before war forces them to embark on a dangerous journey toward a new beginning.

Sanna, Francesca. The Journey. When war destroys their lives, a mother and two children set out on a harrowing odyssey to find safety and hope in a new country. Fairytale elements blend with realism in this poignant tale.

Say, Allen. Grandfather’s Journey. After recounting his grandfather’s migration from Japan to America and back again, Say describes his own similar experiences, eloquently conveying feelings of being torn by a love and longing for both countries.

Watts, Jeri. A Piece of Home. When Hee Jun’s family moves from Korea to West Virginia, he struggles to learn English and adjust to his new surroundings, but with time and patience, the unfamiliar begins to feel like home.

Titles shelved in J-Easy unless otherwise noted.