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Newly arrived from their faraway homeland, a boy and his family enter into the lights, noise, and traffic of a busy American city in this dazzling wordless picture book. The language is unfamiliar. Food, habits, games, and gestures are puzzling. The boy clings tightly to his special keepsake from home and wonders how he will find his way. How will he once again become the happy, confident kid he used to be? Walk in his shoes as he takes the first tentative steps toward discovering joy in his new world. A poignant and affirming view of the immigrant experience.

Here I Am Details

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Alexandra says

Rationale:

Here I Am, written by Patti Smith and illustrated by Sonia Sánchez, tells the story of a young boy and his family who move to the United States. The boy is unhappy in his new home, where everything is strange and unfamiliar. One day, he is forced to explore the city in search of something special he lost. During this search, he discovers interesting people, new sights, and finds a friend to make him feel like this new place is truly home. In continuing my text set's theme of being separated from loved ones, Here I Am portrays the loneliness and isolation felt by a new immigrant who wants nothing more than to go home, and the hope of creating a new home through friends and familiarity.

Text Connection:

Here I Am connects wonderfully to another text in my set, Juna's Jar, as it explores making connections and friendships through shared everyday experiences and objects. In Juna's Jar, Juna and her friend Hector are connected through their shared activity of placing animals and objects in empty kimchi jars. In Here I Am, the protagonist ultimately finds connection with a friend through a seed and shared activities in the city.

Discussion Questions:

Remembering— Why does the boy leave his apartment to explore the city?

Understanding— What pictures show the boy is unhappy when he first moves to the United States?

Applying— Compare and contrast colors at the beginning of the book to the colors at the end.

Analyzing— What events helped the boy to become happy? Why do you think those events made him happy?

Evaluating— Why do you think this book was written without words?

Creating— What would happen if the boy at the end of the book could give advice to himself at the beginning—what might he say?

Cam Duong says

Here I Am by Patti Kim is a wordless picture book about a boy's story of struggle and eventual triumph in a foreign city and country. This book heavily relies on its vivid illustrations. The boy, who is from an Asian country, is seen looking out an airplane window looking very solemn in the beginning. He is clearly not excited to be in the new environment. The readers get to follow the boy through his days as he confronts confusion, loneliness, fear, sadness and isolation. He eventually finds a sense of belonging in his searches for his red seed and the little girl in which the seed fell on. Readers learn from this story that emigrating to a new country is always hard, but things will get better with an open heart and forming new bonds. This book is suitable for children of any age because everyone can interpret it differently, but the message is always the same in the end. The themes include immigration and multicultural friendship.

The illustrations are by Sonia Sanchez and I think it is brilliant because this is a wordless book, so the readers heavily rely on the pictures to make sense of the story. The water colors are rich and beautiful. Even though Sanchez is not part of the group represented, she does a great job with including an older woman in a hanbok in one of the flashback pictures. A hanbok is a traditional Korean dress, so readers who are Korean

or familiar with Korean culture would recognize that the boy and his family came from Korea. The author is part of the group represented and this story is inspired from her own experience of moving to America from Busan, Korean.

Emily says

Wordless Book

Genre: This is a realistic fiction book. I know this because it talks about a family's immigration to America, which is a very real event that happens.

Audience: This book is intended for primary readers.

Connections:

Text to Self: I am getting my endorsement in ESL, so in my practicum I have seen first hand children trying to navigate through a completely different language and society as their own. It is extremely intimidating for them to have to learn how to function in our society, and I hope that I can help them through that journey as their teacher.

Text to Text: This relates to the book Enrique's Journey. Although we get more specifics in Enrique's Journey, both books cover the immigration of boys to America, and the struggles that they face. It is a transition for both of them, but they both have support from those around them.

Text to World: This boy's experience with immigration and trying to navigate a new life is one that millions of children face all over the world. They come from their home, many times without a choice in the matter, and have to find their way in a new society. It is something that we teachers have to support our students through, because it is a very difficult journey.

Ellie Labbett says

Kim and Sánchez show the journey of a boy arriving and setting in a new country. The illustrations really interested me in this, scattered in an almost collage-like formation, with no sense of order. There is such a frenzied feeling of loss of control, and the reader is placed in a similar position of disorientation as they try to decipher the events. To me, this felt quite similar to 'The Arrival', but I think that having the addition of colour makes the new transition all the more overwhelming. It is really interesting to watch how the positioning of Sánchez' illustrations alter as the story progresses and the protagonist becoming more comfortable in his new home. This would be excellent for making inferences, which is only heightened by the accessibility brought about by the lack of words- I can imagine some super book talk about the meaning behind shapes and layering.

Letting go of a part of your past is a difficult thing, and sometimes people need to be pushed into moving forward. Clinging to a small seed from his homeland, a sudden loss causes the child to take a step into this new world. What appeared to be a devastating event was ultimately a positive, as this gentle push helps him to make new relationships. Here, he finds himself able to have fun, despite lacking confidence and having lost his sense of self. This is an important message that would benefit any child, that whilst we may feel scared, it is in immersing ourselves in the outside that we can find ourselves.

Mischenko says

To see this week's wordless picture books please visit www.readrantrockandroll.com

Here I Am is a wordless children's picture book of one incredibly inspiring story of a child's immigration to the United States.

A child and his family leave their home and move into a busy city in the United States. This is difficult for him and he struggles getting used to his new life in the city. He has a new school, new house, and is surrounded by new people. In his hand he carries a keepsake from his homeland which helps him along the way. He accidentally drops it out of a window and down into the street. He realizes in order to get it back he's going to have to go outside and explore which might just be the best thing for him.

This is a story about starting a new life and overcoming fear of the unknown. We enjoyed all the rich, detailed illustrations and the author's note at the end.

5*****

Emilia P says

Being far from my home, in a country where all signs look like gibberish to me, not really knowing where to start enjoying my world and making friends, I felt for the little dude at the heart of this story. It's tough, little dude! And it feels all jumbled together, and weird, and insurmountable.

But look, here is a friendly neighbor sitting outside! Here is another kid playing sidewalk games! Here is a beautiful park with laughing families not unlike your own. Things will be ok! The world is a beautiful place and there are friends to be found everywhere!

Here I Am is sort of a dreamland spin around New York City through the eyes of a nervous young Korean immigrant, a wordless journey through airports, subways, and Central Park. It's a heartening and interesting visual exercise for anyone whose ever felt out of place -- Sonia Sanchez does a great job illustrating the jumbledness of the frustrated, frightened mind, and how beautiful, orderly, and free-flowing things can feel when things start getting better and feeling easier. Although I understand the significance of the wordlessness here (the boy doesn't speak English, he feels like he's without words in this new environment), I still think it could have strengthened the narrative and given the book a bit broader of a readership. Not everyone is ready to latch onto a purely visual (and visually complicated tale). But I am, and am glad I got a chance to "read" this book.

Elena says

A lovely story about a child who struggles with the unfamiliar. He moves to a new country with his parents and at first is confused with the language, intimidated with he tall and unfamiliar buildings and surroundings and how by dropping a precious seed from his home country, he is able to discover the city he currently lives in.

Thebooktrail says

Whether you are a child or an adult, if you have moved from one country to another this book (all in pictures) will resonate with you. It's a poignant story of the confusion of a small boy in a new and scary world.

If ever the saying 'A picture says a thousands words' was true, then this is the book to prove that it is very true indeed. Each and every line in the drawing seems to have been considered with such grace and skill that the feelings of loneliness and overwhelming confusion are imbued in every stroke of the pen and brush.

Patti Kim herself emigrated from Korea to America when she was a child and this is explained at the back of the book. How lovely to have told this story in book form and to have given this as a gift to new readers young and old.

For those of us with experience of even living in a country for a short period, many of the emotions in the book will resonate, not least the boy's expressions and sense of loss. The joys of the new world coupled with the confusion of it is neatly tied up here in stunning illustrations.

Ever felt the joy of a whole new world but then felt sad and confused when you can't do even the simplest thing such as ordering a coffee as you don't know the language or how to go about it? Think of this little boy who doesn't understand the signs or the way on his way to school. The seed he has in his pocket is his way of holding on to some degree of certainty – a security blanket

Bookish musings

This book has no words but it brought me to tears – the fear and loneliness in that little boys face was very sad to see. The signås which appear gibberish at first soon become clearer and it was then that I started to cheer for the little guy as he becomes more confident in his new world.

This book is like a song which gets into your head and never lets go. Ever since I read it, it comes back to me and I see the boy in my mind and he has stayed with me ever since. I wanted to hug him and tell him that everything would be alright on many occasions and I would have done if it had been possible.

The book is so subtle that people who have moved countries will think the book speaks to them in ways that it does no one else. Its the small things that are weird in any new country – the everyday that you take for granted, the shock you feel when things are not the same.

The illustrations are simply stunning and the layout which is decorative and not just left to right adds to the way in which the boys thoughts are not clear cut. The story and pictures together pack quite a punch.

For old and young, this book is really a charming and poignant look at the immigration experience through the eyes of a child.

Lindsey says

Here I Am is one of my wordless book choices. I LOVED this book. I looked through it for the first time and it seemed cluttered and packed full of illustrations. It was a little overwhelming when trying to find the story to have so much for the eye to look at. But upon a slower, second look, it was a charming story of a boy who moved to New York City from an Asian country (I would assume Korea, because the author immigrated to the States herself when she was a child). At first everything is completely unfamiliar and he feels alone in this strange new place. He has a seed that he has brought from his country and carries it with him everywhere until one day he drops it out a window, and a little girl makes off with it. While the little boy is looking for the girl and his red seed, he discovers that the city is a fantastic place and not all that much unlike his previous home. He ends up "finding himself" in his new home.

I would use this book in a classroom of more mature or older elementary children. Because the pictures are complex I think it is a little harder to grasp exactly what is going on. I don't think it would be a good book to read in a big group, maybe in small, teacher guided groups so that the students pick up on some little hints as to what is happening.

Here I Am could be easily related by text to self. Probably all of the children have moved to a new street, school, city, state or even country where they had to navigate new territory and make new friends. Even if it is just going from third grade to fourth grade, every child has had to deal with some kind of change in their life. It would be easy to relate text to world as well. In the book the boy eventually figured out that New York City was a lot like his previous home. There are things that are common in most cities or towns if you look around. I think older students could make those kinds of connections through this book. Because this is a wordless book, it allows children to use their imaginations to fill in the blanks and relate it to other books that they have read.

Raf says

"Here I am" is a great picture book for students who are dealing with being transplanted to the United States. The book has very little text because it is supposed to signify the confusion, angst and the fact that being able to read and understand what is being said. The book is a great resource to start discussions about what people experience and feel when they have to move to the United States from countries of different cultures. Even though the book starts off negatively, reflected by the pictures it ends with the main character, who is an Asian boy, finding friendship in a girl who is African-American. The book celebrates diversity, friendship, and perseverance in his attempts to make sense of his new country. The book is appropriate for primary students as well as students of all ages who just came to the United States and need reassurance.

Alicia says

This wordless picture book removes some of the darkness (and dare I say creepiness of *The Arrival*) and creates another magical experience of being in an immigrant's shoes, especially a young boy. Delightfully engaging and experiences the sights, sounds, and feels without saying a word.

Hilary says

A child arrives with his family in another country, he isn't happy about the move. He has something in his pocket that he drops from his window which forces him to go down to the street to look for it and at the same time explore his new surroundings and meet people.

It wasn't always clear what was happening and which picture came next, perhaps this was intentional to show that the boy felt confused? A page of text at the end of the story explained more. I would have enjoyed this book more with some text by the illustrations.

Edie says

This is a poem in illustration. The back flap says it is the immigration experience of a young boy but as I followed the adventures of the main character I thought it was a girl....so clearly this is a universal experience. Sanchez captures the confusion, the anger, the feeling of being an outsider and a loner, with illustrations that are a bit out of focus, a bit undefined. The reader can tell the story.... lots of discover here, lots to talk about in a wordless book.

Edward Sullivan says

A wordless story with evocative illustrations that effectively captures the confusion, anxiety, and hope of a young new immigrant.

Lorena Martinez says

WORDLESS BOOK #2:

"Here I am" is a realistic fiction book written by Patti Kim. Realistic fiction is when a story uses made up characters in situations that could happen in real life. This book would be great for primary those in pre school-3rd grade. Here I am tells the story of a boy who comes from an Asian land to a big U.S. city. its a story that I am sure many children can relate to.

TEXT TO SELF: I migrated from Mexico to the US at a very young age, and I found myself being able to relate to the boy in the story in so many ways. At the beginning of the book the main character is extremely sad about moving to a place far away from home. When my family decided to migrate to the US we left all of our family, and friends to find better opportunities, that being said I was not happy about leaving. Throughout the book we find that the boy cherishes a red seed he has evidently brought from home. To this day I have a blanket that my grandma knitted and sent with me before we left and it is something very special to me because it reminds me of a place that was once my home.

TEXT TO TEXT: This book reminds me of the book titled "inside Out and Back Again" by Thanhha Lai because it also tells the story of a girl and her family who migrate to another country leaving a piece of themselves behind and carrying only memories. Both books explain the difficulty of being in a completely

different place and adapting to a different culture, language and customs. These books are also from the perspective of the children.

TEXT TO WORLD: To this day immigration is a topic of controversy and this book reminded that everyone has their story and reasons for migrating. The author brought attention to the struggles immigrants face when they leave their country and begin a new life in an unfamiliar place. Currently the US government has been working on implementing laws and regulations in regards to immigration which is why this book is very relevant to the topic. Its nice to have books represent the idea of adapting and finding friends in an unknown place.
