

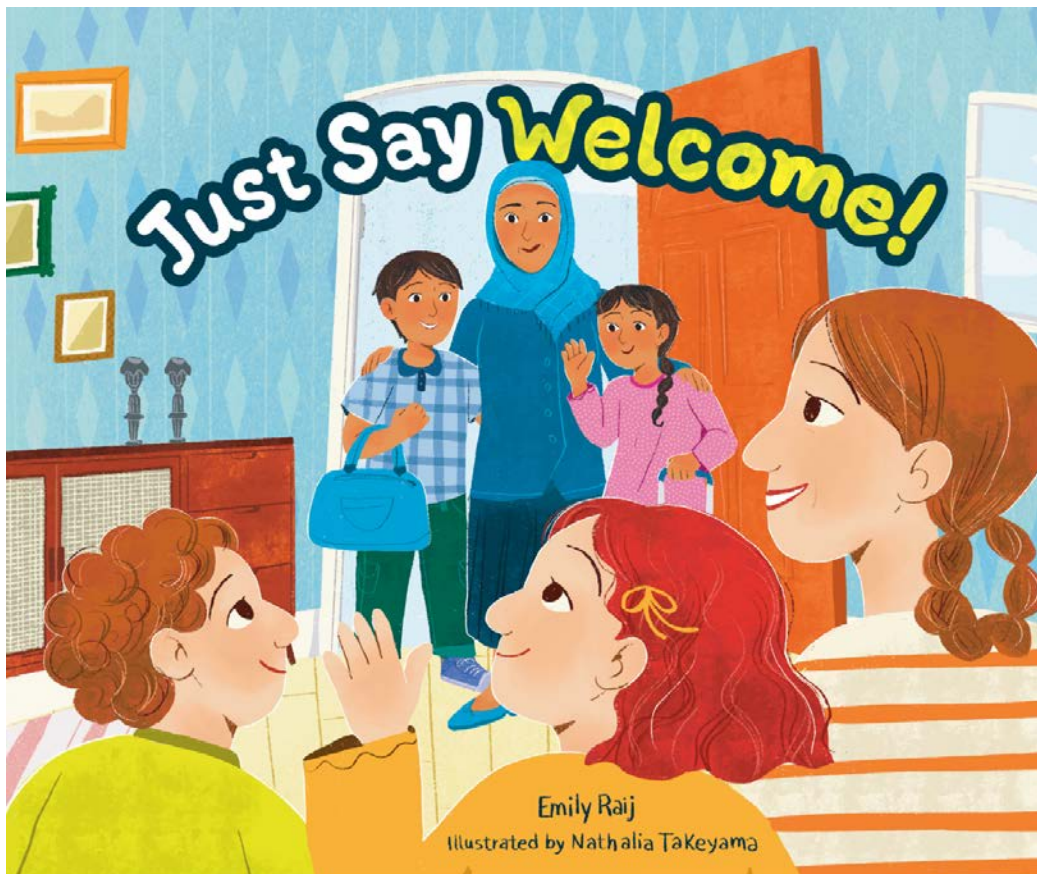
KAR-BEN

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Resources for Teachers and Students



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Ages 4-9 | Grades PreK-3
To purchase the book, call 1-800-4KARBEN or visit
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About the Book

Just Say Welcome is a modern-day story for children in preschool through third grade illustrating the Jewish values of welcoming the stranger and showing hospitality to guests. Young Tilly and her Jewish-American family open up their home to an Iraqi refugee family while they get settled. Both families learn and experience kindness from each other and the larger community. Synagogue members donate clothes, neighbors share food, and the Iraqi boy Youssef teaches Tilly's little brother Adam soccer tricks. Everyone realizes they have more in common than not. Tilly learns that sometimes, just saying "welcome" is all it takes for strangers to become friends. When an apartment becomes ready for the family, Tilly feels sad to see her guests leave. "Thank you for welcoming strangers into your home," Youssef's mom says. "But you're not strangers," says Tilly. "We're friends now and you'll always be welcome here."

About the Author

Emily Rajj has written fifty children's books and edited dozens of K-12 educational resources and nonfiction books. She is a Jewish Book Council Network Author, a journalist, and a program director working with Jewish seniors. Hearing and sharing people's stories is the through line for most of Emily's work. She is a native of Chicago, where she earned her journalism degree from Northwestern University and met her husband. They live in Winter Park, Florida, with their two children.

About the Illustrator

Nathalia Takeyama is a half-Japanese, half-Brazilian artist from São Paulo, creating vibrant digital illustrations inspired by her cultural background and the world around her. After studying animation design and earning an illustration scholarship, she now focuses on texture, color, and diverse characters in her work.

Questions

Before reading:

1. Have you ever felt shy when meeting new people? Did you worry about what to say to them? When did you feel that way? What did you do in that situation?
2. How has someone made you feel welcome in a new place?
3. How would you welcome a family from another country into your home? How would you welcome a student from another country to your school?

After reading:

1. What are some ways Tilly and her family made their guests feel comfortable?
2. How did community members make Ana, Dani, and Youssef feel welcome?
3. What things made Ana, Dani, and Youssef remember their home in Iraq?
4. How were the two families in the story similar? How were they different?

Activities

Welcome Sign

Make a welcome sign to display in a window or hang on your front door. Use markers and stickers to make your sign colorful and welcoming! You can write “Welcome” in English or choose another language. Here are some other languages commonly spoken around the world:

Arabic: Ahlan wa sahan (أهلاً وسهلاً)

Bengali/Bangla: Sbāgata (স্বাগতম)

French: Bienvenue

German: Willkommen

Hebrew: Baruch haba (ברוך הבא)

Hindi: Svaagat (स्वागत)

Mandarin Chinese: Huānyíng (欢迎)

Polish: Witamy

Portuguese: Bem-vindo

Russian: Dobro pozhalovat' (добро пожаловать)

Spanish: Bienvenido

Urdu: Khush amdeed (خوش آمدید)

Welcoming Walk

Take a walk around your neighborhood and count the different welcome mats and signs you see at people’s homes. Does your community look welcoming?

Write a Welcome Note

Do you have a new classmate at school or a new neighbor? Write a note or make a card to welcome them to town. You could include a list of favorite nearby restaurants and activities.



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