

# Readers Theater on Welcoming and Belonging

## READERS THEATER

**I'm New Here** and **Someone New** are companion picture books by Anne Sibley O'Brien (Charlesbridge) about three immigrant children and their new classmates. The books tell two sides of the same story. **I'm New Here** focuses on the first day in an American school for Maria, Jin, and Fatimah and their proceeding months of adjustment. **Someone New** focuses on Jesse, Jason, and Emma, the long-term students who strive to connect with their new classmates.

This readers theater script combines the texts of the two books into a single chronological story. We hope that educators and students will use this script as part of a conversation about creating a community of welcoming and belonging.

Each section in the script represents a scene from 1-2 spreads from both books. Consider projecting the two books or assigning students to turn the pages as the story and script progresses.

## LIST OF ROLES

- 1) **Maria**, newly arrived from Guatemala
- 2) **Jin**, newly arrived from South Korea
- 3) **Fatimah**, newly arrived from Somalia
- 4) **Jesse**, a long-term student in Maria's class
- 5) **Jason**, a long-term student in in Jin's class
- 6) **Emma**, a long-term student in in Fatimah's class
- 7) **Teacher 1** from Maria and Jesse's class
- 8) **Teacher 2** from Jin and Jason's class
- 9) **Teacher 3** from Fatimah and Emma's class
- 10) **Student 1**
- 11) **Student 2**
- 12) **Student 3**
- 13) **Chorus** is all students

## SCRIPT

Maria: I'm new here

Teacher 1: Class, this is Maria.

Jesse: There's someone new in my class.

Teacher 1: Everyone, let's do all we can to welcome Maria.

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## Readers Theater on Welcoming and Belonging

Jin: I am new here.

Teacher 2: Boys and girls, please welcome Jin.

Jason: There's someone new in my class.

Teacher 2: Jin just arrived. He loves to write stories.

—

Fatima: I am new here.

Teacher 3: We have a new student, everyone. Her name is Fatimah.

Emma: There's someone new in my class.

Teacher 3: Emma, please help Fatimah feel at home.

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Maria: Back home I knew the language.  
My friends and I talked all day long.  
Our voices flowed like water and flew between us like birds.  
Vamos a jugar futbol!

Student 1: Orale! Vamanos!

Maria: Here there are new words.  
I can't understand them.  
The sounds are strange to my ears.

Student 2: Kum awn.

Student 3: Mai tern.

Student 1: Hedz up.

Student 2: Thro it heerr.

Student 3: Kot ya.

Student 1: Yoo mist mee.

## Readers Theater on Welcoming and Belonging

Student 2: Mee too.

Student 3: Wun too.

Student 1: Th'ree for.

Jesse: The new girl comes from another country.  
She's trying to speak English.  
She looks like she wants to speak.  
But she doesn't say a word.

At recess, she just stands there, watching.  
Does she want to play? Does she know how?  
Our team is great as it is. I don't want to mess it up.

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Jin: Back home I could read and write.  
I shaped the letters and stacked them like blocks into  
words.  
The words opened like windows and doors into a story.

Here there are new letters.  
They lie on the page like scribbles and scratches.  
All the windows and doors are shut tight.

Jason: The new boy looks frustrated.  
I remember what it was like when I first got here.  
Everyone else was connected like pieces to a puzzle.  
I was the different piece that didn't fit in.

I would share my comic, but he can't read or write.  
I don't know how to figure out this puzzle.  
I wish I had a superpower to help him.

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## Readers Theater on Welcoming and Belonging

Fatima: Back home I was part of the class.  
I knew just what to do.  
I fit in like one of many stars in the night sky.

Chorus: Subax wannaagsin, macalin!  
(Pronounced: soo-bahk wah-nahk-sin, mah-kah-lin)  
(Translated: Good morning, teacher.)

Fatima: Here there are new ways.  
I cannot see the patterns.  
I cannot find my place

Teacher 3: What could you draw to show how we live in our  
community?

Emma: The new girl seems strange to me.  
Everything about her looks different.  
It feels like there's a big distance between us.  
I don't know how to reach her.

I try to explain what we're working on.  
Um . . . we're making pictures about our community.  
She doesn't understand anything I say.  
I don't know how to make her feel at home.

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Maria: Here I am alone.

Jin: Here I am confused.

Fatimah: Here I am sad.

Jesse: I feel uncomfortable.

Jason: I don't know what to do.

Emma: I can't figure out how to help

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## Readers Theater on Welcoming and Belonging

Maria: I say the new words again and again.  
They feel like rocks in my mouth.  
My tongue twists and stumbles on their edges.  
Sah . . . Sahk . . . Sahkerrr.

One day I try new words.  
They do not flow or fly freely.  
But someone understands.

Jesse: One day Maria comes up to me.  
I guess she's been practicing speaking.

Maria: I can . . . play soccer?

Jesse: Huh? Oh, sure.

I can understand her.  
She's so brave to ask to play.

I say we give Maria a chance.  
A few kids on our team don't like that.  
But maybe she can play.

Student 2: Why do you want her on our team?

Student 3: She's not even from here.

Student 1: What if she's no good?

Jesse: Let's see what she can do.

Student 1: What a kick!

Jesse: She's on our team!

Maria: I am finding new friends.  
And they are finding me.

I got the ball!

## Readers Theater on Welcoming and Belonging

Jesse: Game after game, Maria is unstoppable.  
Turns out she played every day back home.  
She didn't want to leave, but it wasn't safe for her parents.  
She had to come here.

Maria, get the pass!... GOAL!

Student 1: Good pass, Jesse!

Student 2: Yay, Maria!

Student 3: Great kick!

Jesse: She may not know many words, but she knows how to play.  
We're even better with Maria.  
On our team, there's room for more.

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Jin: I write letters over and over.  
I stare at the words.  
I look for a way to open them.

Jason: Jin has been practicing writing.  
He shows me what he wrote.  
I can't read it. It's like a secret code.  
He shrugs. I shrug, too.

It feels silly, so I smile. Jin smiles back.  
We both start to laugh.  
Maybe a smile is like a superpower.

Jason: One day I help him with his letters.  
We practice together.  
Jin teaches me how to write in his first language.  
It's like we have a real secret code!

Jin: This is your name in Korean. Jason. Jae-sun.

Jason: Wow, cool!

## Readers Theater on Welcoming and Belonging

Jin: One day I write new letters.  
They are not perfect.  
But I can read the words.  
Cat. Tree. Run.

I am learning from others.  
And they are learning from me.

Jin: How to spell cloud?

Jason: C-L-O-U-D.

Jin: This is cloud in Korean.

Jason: Cool.

I bring in my favorite comic books to share.  
We start to make up our own stories.

Jin: Cat goes flying up in sky!

Jason: Cat to the rescue!  
It's hard to remember a time when Jin wasn't here.

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Emma: A lot of the time Fatimah is gone to another class.  
When she comes back for art, she just sits there.  
She stares down at the blank paper.  
She never looks up.

I decide to make a picture for Fatimah.  
I draw both of us.  
Fatimah looks up at me. There's light in her eyes.

Fatimah: Thank you, Emma.

## Readers Theater on Welcoming and Belonging

Emma: The next day I draw my family and my house.  
Fatimah draws her family and her house.  
She adds flames and soldiers with guns.  
She shows me how her family ran away to another country.  
Were you scared, Fatimah?

Emma: We draw more pictures together.  
Fatimah's colors get brighter and brighter.  
We learn more and more about each other.

Fatimah, I have two brothers, too.

Fatimah: I watch the new ways more and more.  
I try to see the patterns.  
I am scared I will make a mistake.

One day I try taking part.  
I will show my picture.  
My knees tremble, and my heart pounds.  
But my teacher smiles.

Emma: Fatimah, you're a really good artist!

Fatimah: I am sharing with others.  
And they are sharing with me.

—

Jesse: Someone new is part of our team.

Maria: Here there are new beginnings.

Jason: Someone new opens my eyes.

Jin: Here there is a place for me.

Emma: Someone new is my friend.

Chorus: Here is a new home.