



# A Place to Belong

Written by Cynthia Kadohata Illustrated by Julia Kuo

*A Place to Belong* is a window into what life was like for Japanese Americans during and after World War II. Learn how one family lived in internment camps, dealt with the impact of the atomic bombs and found a way to move ahead.

## READ

**Before:** Introduce the book and tell the children a little bit about it. Follow with a comment or question that is related to the story such as, *what do you think this story is about?* Encourage a discussion so the children can comment, ask questions, and express their feelings. Set the stage for listening by asking an “I wonder” statement based on the cover illustration.

I wonder why that girl is standing there with suitcases?

**During:** Encourage the children to comment on the illustrations, ask questions and predict what will happen next in the story. Children gain confidence and a sense of achievement through being able to correctly predict how a story will end. Point out “rare words” (e.g., those words that are not commonly used in every day conversation) and help the children relate the meaning in a way that makes sense to them.

### Rare Words

- Pearl Harbor - a U.S. naval base near Honolulu, Hawaii, that was the scene of a devastating surprise attack by Japanese forces on December 7, 1941.
- Hiroshima - a city in southwest Honshu, Japan, on the Inland Sea west of Osaka. The city was destroyed in World War II when an American airplane dropped the first atomic bomb ever used in warfare on August 6, 1945.
- kintsukuroi - a Japanese art form which means “to repair with gold”. When a ceramic pot or bowl would break, the artisan would put the pieces together again using gold or silver lacquer to create something stronger and more beautiful than it was before.
- internment camp - putting a person in prison or other kind of detention, generally in wartime. During World War II, the American government put Japanese-Americans in internment camps, fearing they might be loyal to Japan.

**After:** Discuss the story. Ask questions...

- Where did Hanako and her family live in the U.S. before moving to Japan?
- What did Hanako’s father have to give up to go to Japan?
- Who did Hanako and her family stay with when they arrived in Japan?
- Hanako and her brother had never met their grandparents until they moved to Japan. How did their relationship grow?
- What was life like on her grandparent’s farm?
- What did Hanako have to learn before attending a new school in a different country?
- What was Japan like after World War II?
- What was the impact of the atomic bombs on life in Japan?
- How do Hanako and her brother feel about returning to the U.S.?



# DO

## Write!

Pick one of the writing prompts below and write down your thoughts. Share them with a classmate.

How would it feel to move to a new country? What types of things might make it hard to adapt? What types of things might make it easier?

Hanako's grandfather tells her about the Japanese custom of kintsukuroi. What do you think he hopes she learns from this?

Hanako reflected that she survived by learning to accept what fate brings her. How do you feel about accepting fate in your own life? Is fate something you can change?

