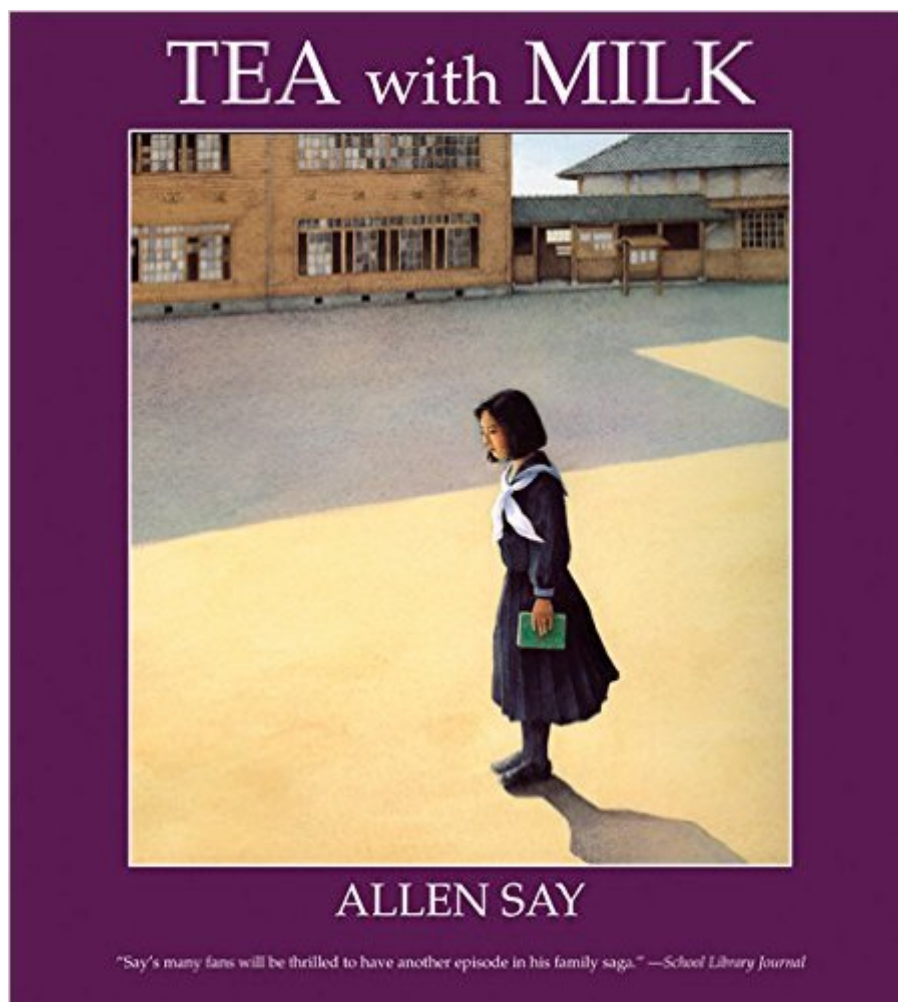


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Tea With Milk



Synopsis

At home in San Francisco, May speaks Japanese and the family eats rice and miso soup and drinks green tea. When she visits her friends' homes, she eats fried chicken and spaghetti. May plans someday to go to college and live in an apartment of her own. But when her family moves back to Japan, she soon feels lost and homesick for America. In Japan everyone calls her by her Japanese name, Masako. She has to wear kimonos and sit on the floor. Poor May is sure that she will never feel at home in this country. Eventually May is expected to marry and a matchmaker is hired. Outraged at the thought, May sets out to find her own way in the big city of Osaka. With elegant watercolors reminiscent of *Grandfather's Journey*, Allen Say has created a moving tribute to his parents and their path to discovering where home really is. The accompanying story of his mother and her journey as a young woman is heartfelt. Vividly portraying the graceful formality of Japan, *Tea with Milk* effectively captures th

Book Information

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Best Sellers Rank: #145,049 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #96 in [Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Where We Live > Country Life](#) #137 in [Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Asia](#) #170 in [Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Where We Live > City Life](#)

Age Range: 4 - 7 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

Customer Reviews

An important theme in *Tea With Milk* is the fact that as people move between two cultures they often do not feel completely comfortable in either one. May's parents return to Japan because they are homesick. I would guess that they are not as Japanese as they would have been had they not lived

in the U. S. Their pushing May to be so traditional could be the result of their attempt to reassimilate. May, of course, experiences most deeply the pain of immigration, and even Joseph, Say's father, is adopted, raised in Shanghai, and working in Japan. Joseph, in fact, best expresses the characters' dilemmas when he says that "home isn't a place or a building that's ready-made and waiting for you, in America or anywhere else". May and Joseph then decide to make a home for themselves and adopt Japan by choice. I found this book more positive and optimistic than Grandfather's Journey where Say's grandfather never seems to reconcile himself to living in either the U.S or Japan and remains saddened, caught between the cultures. Even the title *Tea With Milk* demonstrates some assimilation on the part of the parents. In a country that drinks tea plain, they drink it in the style of western countries and Allen Say states at the end of the book that that is the way he prefers his tea too. Hopefully, he has found some comfort in defining what he likes from both cultures as well.

Realistic in both its pain and beauty, this is a wonderful book. Many Japanese-Americans find, after being considered foreigners in the US all their lives, that they are also considered foreigners in Japan. They find themselves thinking, "Hey, I'm American after all," even if they had been treated as foreigners back home. This is worst for people in parts of the US where there are few Asian people, and this kind of experience can lead to them feeling alone in the world and deeply depressed. In parts of the US where there are many Asian people, they are more likely to feel fully accepted for who they are, and thus, they have a real home. In Hawai'i, Japanese-Americans have for generations made up such a large proportion of the population that they feel very comfortable and confident in their own unique identity: fully American by political loyalty with a culture heavily influenced by Japanese culture but unique to Hawai'i. Having somewhere in the world where you are understood, accepted, and loved contributes toward happiness to a much greater degree than I would have predicted before leaving home. Alan Say captures the complexities and emotions of this kind of struggle with a short, carefully worded text and several beautiful illustrations. And it has a happy ending!

Masako's struggle to be a "lady" in Japan after growing up with more freedom in the U.S. is one of the main themes of this book. Although most of the story takes place after Masako has graduated from high school, the events are explained clearly, and are interesting to both children and adults. The last page reminds the reader that Masako is not a fictional character but in fact the author's mother.

Allen Say writes stories from the heart and his artistic talents enable him to include beautiful illustrations that enhance his stories. My eight-year-old daughter and I have enjoyed several of his books and "Tea with Milk" proved to be another engaging read, recounting the experiences of the author's independent and strong-willed mother, Masako. As a child Masako and her parents moved to San Francisco where Masako learned the differences between the Japanese and American cultures. She comes to be known as May to her friends and begins to embrace life in the United States. But then, just as Masako is beginning high school, her homesick parents decide to move the family back to Japan. The story recounts in poignant detail the feelings of loneliness and alienation experienced by Masako as she struggles to adapt to life in her homeland. She is alienated by her peers who consider her a "Gaijin" or foreigner due to her fluent English and strange ways. Masako chafes at the relative lack of freedom for women in Japan, and ultimately decides to embark on a course that enables her to find a place for herself, a place she can call a true home. "Tea with Milk" is a beautiful, bittersweet story that is also inspiring and uplifting and will appeal to readers of all ages.

Tea with Milk by Allen Say shows a foreigner's emotions in a different country. It also is a realistic example of perseverance. How one cannot accept but still adapt a country as home. Masako is not happy with Japan and is having trouble coping with the differences from America until she finds something that evokes retrospective thoughts of home. It makes a good example of how one can cope with difference in a realistic situation. It also shows great courage and perseverance by making Masako an example. Masako was a "gaijin" (foreigner) who was taunted but she didn't give up and return to California. Another event takes place when Masako refuses to have an arranged marriage, but still finds someone both she and her parents approve of. This shows how a child can adapt to a culture realistically. This book is an excellent example of the realistic situation of moving because it uses Masako as an example of a child coping with major differences. It also shows perseverance in real-life situations. Not only that, but it shows the struggle of a foreigner to acceptance and understanding. This book can bring much hope to the right reader.

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