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# Goodnight sister : an original children's book

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# **Goodnight Sister: An Original Children's Book**

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## **Abstract**

### Goodnight Sister: An Original Children's Book

By Johanna Pyun

Goodnight Sister is an original children's book written for five to seven year olds that touches on the themes of adoption, sibling relationships, and culture. Relayed through the voice of a six year old girl named Sophie, Goodnight Sister tells the story of her family deciding to adopt her two cousins from South Korea after their father passes away. As her new brother and sister adjust to life in America, the two cultures are represented in different ways, and sibling relationships are built on a foundation of acceptance and forgiveness. This memoir shares the true makeup of my family along with memorable instances that have remained with me to this day. In sharing my experiences through Goodnight Sister, I wish to provide children with a chance to connect personally with a story that may ring true in their life, and also to give them a different perspective of looking at conflicts that may prompt constructive resolutions.

This independent study includes a rationale on how and why Goodnight Sister was conceived, a child development piece targeting five to seven year olds, a literature for children review including an annotated bibliography of picture books based on the overarching themes mentioned above, the original book Goodnight Sister, an application section comprising of my personal experience reading the story aloud to a kindergarten classroom as well as suggestions on how this story can be incorporated into different units of study, and lastly a bibliography of all the sources utilized for writing this thesis.

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## Rationale

I decided to write “Good Night, Sister” because I wanted to share a true story about my family. I really do have a younger brother and sister who are from South Korea. Their father, who was my uncle, passed away from stomach cancer eight and a half years ago. Adopting them and bringing them to the United States to start a new life was a decision my parents and grandparents made on their behalf. Having a family with a mixture of biological and adopted children is a family makeup becoming more common nowadays. I loved the idea of writing this story from my perspective for those children who have an adopted sibling. Through this story, those children can read and connect with the character, as well as learn about building new relationships, forgiving others, and coping with sibling rivalry.

Coming from a traditional South Korean family, I also wanted to share a bit of my culture through this story. As the Korean population is increasing in the United States as well as all over the world, I thought it appropriate to share the different traditional foods eaten in many households and seen in many Korean restaurants. I also wanted to introduce the Korean custom of using an honorific pronoun to refer to someone older than you instead of calling him or her by name. For example, instead of calling your older brother “Daniel”, you would call him either “*Big Brother*” or “*Daniel Big Brother*” in Korean. This applies to anyone who is your elder. This concept is very different from the very informal one of the United States where children comfortably call their grandparents and teachers by their first name. There are qualities of each culture to be accepted and valued, and I believe that our family

exhibits an interesting meld of the two. All of my siblings (including me) took on English names for our official first names but kept our Korean names for our middle names. We mostly use each other's Korean names when we are together and remember to call the older siblings and relatives by the appropriate honorific pronoun. Culture and custom are major influences in our lives; music is another invaluable influence in my family. In the story, June and Chris (*Jeesun* and *Inho*) perform Amazing Grace for our family in preparation for an upcoming concert. This is an illustration of their progress of assimilating into the American lifestyle and more importantly, becoming a part of our family. June and Chris start off a bit nervous and unsure of themselves but gain confidence as they progress through the song, and life itself.

Lastly, bringing different ways of saying goodnight into the story was for the purpose of sharing my appreciation for different languages. I believe language has the power to bring people closer together and to shape them into the type of person they become. When June and Sophie teach each other a different way of saying goodnight, not only do they build a stronger foundation of communicating with each other, they also create an intimate bedtime routine that speaks on much deeper levels. Their sharing of goodnight on the last page expresses the unspoken words of forgiveness and acceptance.

## Child Development

“A person is always a personality in the making, developing and redeveloping” (Maier, 1988, p. 86). This quotation articulated by Erik Erikson, is a statement that I believe applies accurately to young children. Between the ages of five to seven, children grow physically, cognitively, emotionally, and in every way possible, are strongly influenced by their environment. A parent chaperoning a class trip once shared that she had been curious to see her six-year-old son using Rock n’ Roll gestures and expressions at home. She realized during the course of the trip that he had learned all of them from a classmate of his. Children at this age are influenced by their peers because of their growing independence from their parents and an increasing dependence on their friends.

*“Fives are hungry for friends...The frantic search of five-year-olds for friends can thus be seen to forecast the beginnings of a basic shift in the parent-child relationship, a shift which will occur gradually over many long years, and in which a child needs not only the support of child allies engaged in the same struggle but also the understanding of his parents” (Cohen, 1972, p. 60-61).*

Friends become just as important as family for fives and sixes now that kindergarteners spend a large part of their day at school and away from home. They begin to make friends with others with whom they share interests, and with those whom they spend a significant amount of time. Whether it is taking the same ballet class together or building skyscrapers with blocks, opportunities for students to connect with each other become more frequent, thereby fostering close-knit friendships. However, there are frequent shifts in friendships as well; one play date together can lead two classmates to become best friends in one afternoon. The more

imaginative and pretend play of four and early five year olds slowly transitions into a more social and collective type of play where established rules become important. Games such as Tag, and Red Light, Green Light, One Two Three, become more popular as children reach six and seven. Their points of view slowly shift from self-identity and egocentricity to a social involvement where they process what others are doing or saying and act accordingly.

Late fives, sixes and sevens, use friendships as a way to express themselves and learn. They bounce information and knowledge they are acquiring with each other and try to make sense of the world as they talk to their friends. Piaget stated how “Conversation is an extension of thinking aloud, and it projects individual thoughts into the social plane and encourages collective expressions” (Maier, 1988, p. 51). I overheard a conversation taking place with three six year olds talking about where heaven was located.

Student 1: “Heaven is in the sky.”

Student 2: “It’s in space.”

Student 1: “No it’s higher than space.”

Student 2: “Then it’s in outer space.”

Student 1: “No it’s higher than outer space. It’s where God lives.”

Student 2: “God is in outer space.”

Student 3: “Maybe God is everywhere. He’s in space, in outer space, in earth, and in heaven.”

Student 1: “I know he’s not in the other place inside the earth. That’s where bad people go.”

As these three students share what they know of the world, they make conclusions that reflect their growing level of logical reasoning. A critical aspect that cannot be overlooked as five to seven year olds continue to learn and develop friendships is their need to gain a sense of competency and self-worth. Without a decreasing dependency on family, a growing confidence in themselves, and a desire to learn,

children at this age find it difficult to find acceptance and to fit in with their peers. A need for family to be a firm anchor is still prevalent. Having parents available to communicate with and to help make sense of experiences are essential at this stage of their development.

*While they do not need, and ought not to have, adults hovering over them, they do need help in understanding that what their companions desire and fear may be as valid as, even if different from, their own feelings (Cohen, 1972, p. 62).*

Five and six year olds are still grappling with egocentricity and are learning to see the other person's side of the story. Reading books offers children an opportunity to step into another person's shoes and to understand the problems and feelings the story's characters are experiencing. Stories that five through seven year olds can identify with are realistic fiction books, which help them to see that other people have struggles that they too have. For instance, making new friends and being accepted, dealing with feelings of disappointment or sadness, and resolving arguments with friends or family are topics any child can relate to. However, five year olds find it easier to bond with the character in feathers or fur compared with the character that is a young boy or girl like him or herself. These animal characters are removed enough from themselves that the stories aren't too close to home. Fives still have a hazy grasp of fantasy and reality, thus a grim story of monsters and goblins may scare them because they seem too real.

As six year olds and seven year olds begin to firmly distinguish what is fantasy and reality, their thinking processes become more logical. Their thought processes and reasoning skills are maturing in ways that are more similar to an adult's than to a young child's. "The shift in cognitive development is accompanied

by a shift in reasoning, an understanding of cause and effect in the natural world (e.g., what makes the clouds move) and a widening vision” (Wood, 1997, p. 61). Children at this age are motivated by their curiosity to explore and discover the hows and whys of the world. They are able to cognitively organize existing information with newly acquired information in different ways. Six and seven year olds begin to classify objects by their less concrete properties and functions, whereas fives, use concrete properties as the dominant way they classify objects into groups. A child classifying objects by their concrete properties may group circular objects together (e.g. marbles, oranges, and balls), and later classify objects by less concrete properties, such as color (e.g. the cup, the eraser, and the apple). Classifying by function is the most difficult of the three since the outer appearance of the objects is not the prevailing factor. For instance, grouping objects for eating (e.g. strawberries, mangoes, and cherries). Classifying objects by abstract concepts is still difficult for children at this age. Sixes and sevens are beginning to grasp a sense of time and understand that there are other countries around the world. However unless the child has walked the streets of Paris and climbed the Eiffel Tower, it’s hard for them to learn about the city if they have never experienced it for themselves.

*According to Piaget, the young school child is still egocentric, meaning that he and his experiences continue to remain the points of departure for his learning. It is not really possible for them at this age to think objectively about matters which do not impinge on them (Cohen, 1972, p.139).*

Learning history and geography become comprehensive through kinesthetic means for young children, just as learning math with Unifix cubes or science with

magnifying lenses enables them to gain true understanding of the more nonconcrete concepts.

An essential way to learn kinesthetically for children is through play. Erikson stated, "Play deals with life experiences which children attempt to repeat, master, or negate in order to organize their inner world in relation to their outer world."

(Maier, 1988, p.83) Children use dramatic play to make sense of the different roles in society, whether it is being a mother, an older sibling, or even a pet dog, children act out the roles as they witnessed them or imagined them to be. For example, a group of kindergarten girls in my class were pretending to be members of a family during outdoor recess. As most of them ran around the yard wailing and whining, a young girl hurried from one side of the yard to another consoling and ordering each of them to stop crying, to come with Mommy, to eat their food, and etc. She then abruptly stops to exclaim, "It's exhausting being the Mommy!" Playing with blocks is also vital to learn about physics, architecture, and math. Arranging blocks to be steady with a firm foundation, balancing blocks to make approximate proportions of a skyscraper, and distinguishing between all the different blocks on the shelves are skills acquired with practice and experience in the block building area. Play is the mode children use to attain better understanding of the outer world.

Using their five senses provides lasting learning for all children. When they are involved in activities that involve seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling, the whole child is present and absorbent of all the material.

*When the spread of children's concerns actually serves as a base for answers to their questions, and opportunities are offered them to examine with their senses, there is no telling how much they can absorb (Cohen, 1972, p. 69).*

Mashing and molding clay into the shapes of their chosen animal for their animal research project or noticing the differences in shapes, colors, and light while painting a bowl of fruit are all opportunities for students to learn valuable concepts through engaging means. Six year olds and seven year olds have a noticeably longer attention span compared with their five year old selves. Involved in activities of their interest, first graders can delve deeply and digest much more information than before. When the teacher thoughtfully chooses activities for children to pursue their interests, successful learning is bound to happen if structure and thought provoking ideas are presented. Orchestrating work times with clear and predictable routines bring a sense of security into the classroom which gives young children a feeling of control in their life of constant change and growing independence.

Sixes and sevens like having routines and rules because they help build rational thinking. At this stage of their developmental thinking, everything is good or bad, fair or not fair, and right or wrong. Young children constantly struggle with the authority figure, using their own reasoning to justify their actions. A five year old may refuse to follow directions and then burst into tears when reasoned with, but an older six year old may begin to explain him or herself in opposition to the authority figure.

*A child no longer rebels daringly in defiance of the acknowledged authority. He now begins to stake out his rights and argue. He is much preoccupied with the idea of fairness to himself, which is a natural consequence of the greater consciousness of himself as a person separate from parents, and he wants his rights (Cohen, 1972, p. 121).*

Six year olds are also noisy and verbal. They try out different behaviors such as complaining, tattling, bossing and even throwing tantrums. Their competitive



natures or lack of nuanced understandings, may lead them to cheat or lie to win. Because of their more mature reasoning skills, sixes and sevens experiment with lying to avoid negative consequences for their actions. In my class, one six year old boy continued to adamantly argue that he didn't punch another boy in the stomach even though the teacher replied that she had seen him do it with her very own eyes. He went on to explain that he accidentally knocked into him while he was playing. On the other hand, the strong emotions and enthusiasm that six year olds have motivate them to work hard and try to be correct in their schoolwork and social behaviors. Sixes enjoy working in collaboration with other students, and act according to the notion that there is no job too big for them to tackle. One needs to be careful with these young children of being too critical or discouraging. They take failure hard and desire approval from their adult figures.

Counter to six year olds, sevens are quieter and more passive. They tend to work individually and are more withdrawn.

*Sevens can be extremely moody, sulking and sometimes depressed. They are often content to spend long periods in their rooms, alone by choice, reading or listening to music or playing with animals or dolls (Wood, 1997, p.70).*

These children need adult support and guidance in dealing with the world and navigating situations that can be cruel and harsh. With the assurance and reinforcement of caring authority figures, sixes and sevens will be equipped with the self-confidence and feelings of self-worth that they need in order to excel academically and socially. At the same time, children need to learn to work things out on their own. They need to have arguments and struggles in order to experience the pleasure of resolving conflicts. While fives are just beginning to use their words

in place of their body to express their feelings, sixes and sevens are getting more adept at sharing their thoughts and emotions. Substituting accusations with “I felt bad when you...” and “Could you please not...” are steps they are taking to constructively resolve conflicts by talking things out.

## **Conclusion**

In creating Goodnight Sister, I wanted to create a story for young children that supports their developmental growth in many ways. Children from the ages of five to seven are going through the transition of being less dependent on their parents to becoming more dependent on their peers. Making new friends, playing together, and learning new things through friendships are all essential steps that need to be taken in order for a child to successfully mature socially, cognitively, academically, and emotionally. In the story, Sophie and her new sister June become good friends right away. They learn new things from each other (e.g. the different types of delicious food in Korea versus the United States, how to say goodnight in Spanish and in Japanese, etc.), and share experiences together (e.g. they explore the beach by the lighthouse, and decide on what English names to have). Through this friendship of sisterhood, Sophie and June share ideas and glean interesting bits of knowledge from each other to gain better understanding of the two different cultures and their home countries.

The characters Sophie and June are in stark contrast with the character Anna because of their different age related personality traits. Both being six, the two are energetic, noisy, verbal, and argumentative. Anna on the other hand, is quiet,

reserved, and more passive. Being the eldest sister, she is the wisest but also more detached. Even when Sophie and June go to the park with Chris, Anna is not in the scene because she prefers to stay indoors to read or to listen to music (as is the case for my older sister). Sophie and June are enthusiastic in getting to know each other and in spending time together. They also exhibit strong emotions when they were arguing about which dress shirt June would wear for her concert. Their yelling match is going nowhere until the parents come to alleviate the problem. I chose Sophie to be the one who resolves the conflict because she finds assurance from talking with her father. She is able to use her words to express regret and sadness, and then to reconcile their friendship. Sophie's time with her Dad enables her to see the argument in a different light. He makes her realize that brothers and sisters butt heads sometimes. Through forgiveness and acceptance, they are able to come together closer than before and as better people. Parents can help children find a way of making a more mature sense of experiences and that's what I wanted to portray in this story. A parent who orders the child to say sorry does not promote independence or maturation. By sharing the concrete imagery of the two rocks rubbing against each other to become smooth as an analogy for Sophie's relationship with June, Sophie was able to understand the problem and reconcile with June.

Other reasons for writing Goodnight Sister are to share my Korean American culture and the story about my unique family makeup. Writing about the different Korean food my family likes to eat for dinner, mentioning how honorific terms are used in place of pronouns in referring to older siblings and relatives, the Korean

names of my adopted brother and sister, and their choice of new American names are all the different ways I chose to share a bit of my culture. Just like the jalapeño bagels represented Pablo's Mexican and Jewish heritage in Natasha Wing's Jalapeño Bagels, Goodnight Sister portrays the blend of the Korean and American cultures. In my book, italics are used to signify the words that are spoken in Korean while the words without italics are spoken in English. I chose to depict the different aspects of culture shown in the story through concrete objects like food, locations, names, and languages in order for the concepts presented in this story to be developmentally appropriate and cognitively accessible for this age group. I believe this story is meant to be read aloud to young children. Their comprehension skills are much more advanced than their decoding skills in reading. When an adult reads Goodnight Sister aloud to children, they can focus on the emotions, the events, and the new facts evident in the book rather than struggle through each word and sentence.

Lastly, I wanted to share my family's story of how and why we adopted my two cousins from Korea and how they become my real siblings. Thinking about the different reasons why families choose to adopt offers a better understanding of family diversity. Some people choose to adopt because they desire to become a family with children. They would like to fill a missing gap in their lives. Other people choose to adopt in order to provide a home for children who don't have a permanent place to live. These parents may have the resources necessary and the desire to share them with a child in need. Finally, as was our family's case, the opportunity fell "right into our laps." I never met my cousins before since they were in Korea. When cancer took their father away from them, our family knew without a

doubt what needed to be done. After we brought them here to join our family, they needed time to adjust to the American lifestyle, and we all needed time to get to know each other. However, now that we have built this life together, we wouldn't want it any other way. I think that the circumstances surrounding my cousins; adoption are unique and is not a common occurrence for most families.

Goodnight Sister is a memoir about my family that displays how unique my family really is. With the promise of love and commitment to each other, our family has grown not only in number but in its cultural composition as well as its character. I send off Goodnight Sister in the hopes that perspectives will be widened and that readers will reexamine themselves just as I did after reading the books in my annotated bibliography.

## Annotated Bibliography

### Adoption

**Cummings, M., & Wang, L. (2006). *Three Names of Me*. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman.**

An adopted girl named Ada shares her three names which are all a part of who she is. Her first name is the one she can't remember but knows is the one her birth mother whispered to her when she was born. Wang Bin, which means gentle and refined Chinese princess, was the one given to her at the orphanage she stayed at until she was adopted. And lastly, her third name is the one she received after joining her new family; Ada, which means "love arrived" in Chinese.

- Ages: 6-9

**Kraus, J. H., & Ritz, K. (1992). *Tall Boy's Journey*. Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda Books.**

A young Korean boy, Kim Moo Yong, becomes an orphan when his grandmother dies. He is left in his uncle's care; however, his uncle needs to leave for the army. Kim Moo Yong is then adopted by an American couple and brought to their home by airplane. Kim Moo Yong finds everything to be unfamiliar and scary, and needs to get used to the different food, the new language, and the strange lifestyle. As the boy gains more understanding of the American lifestyle and trust for his new parents, Kim Moo Yong adjusts to his new way of life and is surprised to see he has gained a loving family and new friends in the process.

- Ages: 6-9

**Krishnaswami, U., & Akib, J. (2006). *Bringing Asha Home*. New York: Lee & Low Books.**

A boy named Arun is excited about having a new sister from India but is disappointed when the adoption paperwork takes a long time to process. He imagines all the things he wants to do with his sister and plans for her arrival. Arun imagines the special bond he could have with his new sister, and makes a special colorful paper airplane to give to her. He is delighted when Asha finally comes home and gives him an unexpected surprise.

- Ages: 5-8

**Kroll, V. L., & Schuett, S. (1994). *Beginnings: How families come to be*. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman.**

This book consists of six different stories about children and how each of them came to be a part of their family. The first story is about a family with a

newborn son. The father and mother feel much love and excitement in having their first child. The second story is about a Korean child who is adopted through an adoption agency by a Caucasian man and woman. The couple loves their daughter so much they decide to adopt another child, a son from Africa. The third story is one very similar to the story of my younger brother and sister. The child's mother is very ill. Before she passes away, her brother promises to adopt the child and raise him as his own. Although the brother is a single parent and does not have much experience raising children, he does so for his sister and for his nephew. The fourth story tells how a young couple had a child that they couldn't support. They choose someone they believe will be a caring parent for their daughter. The next two stories include adoptions set up through a doctor and then through a foster home. There are thousands of stories about adoption and families, but this compilation book really strikes a chord with all the personal stories of each individual child.

- Ages: 5-8

**Parr, T. (2007). *We Belong Together: A book about adoption and families*. New York, NY: Megan Tingley Books.**

This story talks about the different reasons why families belong together. "We belong together because... you needed a home and I had one to share. Now we are a family." The adopted children all have needs that are fulfilled by their new parent(s). Being together as one family gives each family something valuable that they didn't have before. "We belong together because... you needed someone to say 'I love you' and we had love to give. Now, we all have someone to kiss good night." Todd Parr ends the book with the heartfelt message, "There are lots of different ways to make a family. It just takes love. Share your home, and share your heart. Love, Todd."

- Ages: 4-7

**Young, E. (2006). *My Mei Mei*. New York: Philomel Books.**

A Chinese girl named Antonia is adopted by Mommy and Baba when she is 6 months old. Antonia wants a real Mei Mei (little sister) instead of playing Jieh-Jieh (big sister) with her parents. The parents decide to adopt another child but the infant ends up not being what Antonia expected. Disappointed by Mei Mei's inability to play games with her and having all her parents' attention go to Mei Mei, Antonia feels left out. However as time goes by, Antonia and her little sister develop a loving relationship. They look out for one another and have fun together. By the end of the story, the two want another younger Mei Mei and ask their parents for one.

- Ages: 6-8

## **Sibling Relationship**

**Blume, J., & Trivas, I. (1984). *The Pain and the Great One*. New York: Dragonfly Books.**

This book is divided into two sections; the first half of the book shows the sibling relationship through the older sister's eyes while the second half of the book shows their relationship through the younger brother's eyes. In reading both parts, the reader sees how the other sibling can be annoying and a major pain most of the time. However, it's more fun and less lonely when the other sibling is around.

- Ages: 6-8

**Duke, K. (2007). *The Tale of Pip & Squeak*. New York: Dutton Children's Books.**

In this story, Pip and Squeak are mice that are brothers. They live together in different parts of their house because Pip hates having to listen to Squeak practice singing while Squeak hates the smell of Pip's paint. The two brothers are always competing and trying to outdo each other in things big and small. Suddenly one day, they learn to work together when they are able to turn a big mess into a great success.

- Ages: 5-7

**Muth, J. J. (2005). *Zen Shorts*. New York: Scholastic Press.**

A big panda bear named Stillwater becomes friends with three siblings (Addy, Michael, and Karl) when he goes to their backyard to retrieve his lost umbrella. As each sibling spends time with Stillwater, the bear shares a story with each of them that helps them to see the world a little differently. When the youngest sibling, Karl, goes to spend the day with Stillwater, he complains about his older brother who is always telling him what to do. Stillwater then shares a story called "A Heavy Load," about a young monk who broods and is preoccupied about a young woman who is selfish and rude to an older monk. After the young monk blurts out his troubled thoughts, the older monk replies, "I set the woman down hours ago, why are *you* still carrying her?" After Stillwater asks Karl whether he has carried his anger toward Michael long enough, Karl answers yes and then returns home feeling much better.

There were two other stories, "Uncle Ry and the Moon" and "The Farmer's Luck" that Stillwater tells to Addy and then to Michael. After hearing the first one, Addy thinks about how she didn't think she could give her only robe away to a stranger. After hearing the second story Michael comes to the conclusion that "Maybe good luck and bad luck are all mixed up. You never know what will happen next",. These stories all came from Zen Buddhist literature, which have been passed down for centuries. The short stories give readers ideas to puzzle over, and fuel to reexamine themselves.



- Ages: 6-9

**Polacco, P. (1994). *My Rotten Red Headed Older Brother*. New York: Simon & Schuster.**

When a younger sister, Patricia, realizes she cannot run faster, climb higher, throw farther, eat more, etc. than her older brother Richard, she wishes on a falling star to outdo her brother in everything. When she finally wins by riding on the merry-go-round longer than her older brother, she falls and hurts her head coming off of the ride. After she faints from the bang to her head, Richard carries her all the way home and runs to get the doctor. Patricia's relationship with her brother changes when she finds out how older brothers can take care of their sisters.

- Ages: 5-8

**Yezerksi, T. (2000). *Queen of the World*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux.**

Three sisters are always fighting and arguing about who's the smartest, the fastest, or simply the best. They decide to award the Queen-of-the-World crown to the one who gives the best birthday gift to mom. When the girls start fighting over the crown, everything falls apart, and they end up ruining Mom's birthday. The girls then decide to work together to give Mom exactly what she's always wanted: for them to get along.

- Ages: 5-7

## Culture

**Chin-Lee, C., & Tang, Y. (1993). *Almond Cookies & Dragon Well Tea*. Chicago, IL: Polychrome Pub.**

When an American girl (Erica) visits her Chinese-American friend's house (Nancy) for the first time, she feels shy and nervous at first. However, during the visit she is delighted to learn about different aspects of her friend's cultural heritage. She meets Nancy's parents and grandparents, tastes delicious almond cookies and dragon well tea for the first time, sees how Nancy's family remembers and honors their great grandparents, and even learns a bit of their language. Although something might feel strange and scary at first, Erica realizes that once you experience and come to understand it, it isn't actually strange or different at all.

- Ages: 6-9

**Compestine, Y. C., & Xuan, Y. (2002). *The Story of Noodles*. New York: Holiday House.**

The three Kang brothers are tired of eating rice with every meal. When the annual cooking contest rolls around, they decide to try something new. When they are left alone to prepare the dough for dumplings, the boys accidentally invent flour strips, or noodles, that they can eat like a drumstick (rolled around the chopsticks), suck up like a worm, and cut with their teeth like they are cutting grass. The boys win the emperor's prize for their unusual and delicious creation.

- Ages: 6-9

**Isadora, R. (1992). *Over the Green Hills*. New York: Greenwillow Books.**

In a rural village called Mpame in South Africa, a boy named Zolani gets ready to visit his grandmother with his mother. He gathers a sack of mussels, and chooses a young goat to bring while his mother balances a box of dried fish on her head, and ties his baby sister around her back. On the long walk to Grandma Zindzi's, they see friends who gift them with a pumpkin and books. They trade some dried fish for a bundle of wood, help pull a pig out of a hole, watch an ostrich speeding away, and buy a chicken from a roadside rondavel. They end up meeting lots of people and acquiring lots of things to give to Grandma Zindzi.

- Ages: 5-8

**Park, L. S., & Lee, H. B. (2005). *Bee-bim Bop!* New York: Clarion Books.**

A young girl helps her mom cook a traditional Korean dish for their family's dinner. While grocery shopping, preparing all of the ingredients and setting the table, the girl sings the same song of "Hurry Mama hurry... hungry hungry hungry for some BEE-BIM-BOP! During each step of the process.

- Ages: 4-6

**Say, A. (1991). *Tree of Cranes*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.**

A Japanese boy learns about Christmas for the first time when his mother shares her past experiences from the time she lived in the United States. They have their own celebration by decorating a little pine tree from their garden with silver cranes and lit candles. The boy then wakes up the next morning to find a new samurai kite waiting for him beneath the Christmas tree.

- Ages: 6-9

**Wing, N., & Casilla, R. (1996). *Jalapeño Bagels*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.**

Pablo wonders what he should bring to share with his classmates for International Day at school. He reflects on what represents both cultures of his family, his mother's Mexican heritage and his father's Jewish heritage. Pablo considers his mother's empanadas de calabaza (pumpkin turnovers) and his father's challah (Jewish braided bread) from the choices in his parents' bakery. He finally decides to bring jalapeño bagels because they are a mixture of both his parents, just like he himself is.

- Ages: 6-9

**Wong, J. S., & Jia, B. (2000). *The Trip Back Home*. New York: Harcourt.**

When a young girl and her mom visit her grandparents and aunt in their rural village in Korea, they experience the traditional lifestyle of ancient Korea. The girl helps her haraboji (grandfather) add charcoal to the tunnels that warm the air under the floor, helps halmoni (grandmother) shop at the outdoor marketplace, and helps emo (aunt) sew warm clothes for winter. They listen to haraboji's stories, play hatu (cards with pictures of nature), and read books together.

- Ages: 6-9

## Literature for Children's Review

Goodnight Sister would fall under the categories of culture, adoption, and sibling relationships.

Mary Cummings' book, Three Names of Me, seamlessly interweaves the Chinese culture and language through the illustrations as well as through the storyline. Chinese characters were included in some of the illustrations, for instance there was a frame by Ada's bedside with her name written in Chinese calligraphy and also in small English letters underneath. Cynthia Chin-Lee's story Almond Cookies & Dragon Well Tea, also beautifully incorporates the Chinese language through visual displays of Chinese artwork, Asian furnishing, and Chinese characters around Nancy's home. Nancy's friend Erica is also taught how to say "How are you?" in Chinese ("Nihao"). In the illustration where Erica greets Nancy's grandma Popo, and grandpa Gung gung in Chinese, "Nihao" is written in Chinese characters. Almond Cookies & Dragon Well Tea gives readers an inside peek into the home life of a traditional Chinese family. The writer shares many interesting aspects of the Chinese culture that the family retained even after immigrating to the United States. The family continued the tradition of remembering and honoring their ancestors by building a family altar with a red wooden frame. At the altar they pay tribute by placing a bowl of oranges and almond cookies, in addition to burning incense sticks. Nancy even plays the Chinese zither called the guzheng, which is a plucked stringed instrument found in many Asian countries.

Just as these stories share bits of culture and let the reader have a taste of the ethnic language, I wanted Goodnight Sister to give an uncomplicated narrative about the different cultural aspects in our family. Language is a key element in the story because of the back and forth from English to Korean, shown in italics when someone speaks in Korean. “‘Hi!’ I said to them in Korean, ‘*My name is Sophie and this is Anna Big Sister.*’” In this line from the story, Sophie greets her new brother and sister in Korean. She introduces herself, and then her older sister as *Anna Big Sister*. *Big Sister* is the translated name you would use to refer to an older sister instead of calling her by her first name. Being on a first name basis only happens when you are with your peers or when you are speaking with someone younger than you. In this way, the Korean culture is very honorific and emphasizes showing respect to elders. Another way the Korean culture is portrayed in Goodnight Sister is by the food they eat. Sophie’s family has a Korean feast for dinner the day Sophie’s new brother and sister come home. White rice, seaweed soup, Korean barbeque, Kimchi, and several side dishes are all common and popular Korean foods that are introduced. Other aspects of the Korean culture are shown in Janet Wong’s book, The Trip Back Home, which takes place in a rural village in South Korea. A young girl and her mother visit her grandparents and aunt bringing thoughtful gifts for each of them. The young girl experiences the daily routines that enable the family to have heat in the house, food on the table, and warm clothes to wear for the winter. It’s the type of lifestyle that ancient Korea had when most people were dependent on nature for food, shelter, and heat. The family also plays a traditional Korean card

game called “Hato” altogether. The young girl bonds with her family in many different ways and then leaves for home having accumulated lasting memories.

Some stories describing the cultures of other countries are Over the Green Hills by Rachel Isadora and Bringing Asha Home by Uma Krishnaswami. Located in Mpame, South Africa, a young boy named Zolani goes to visit his grandmother’s village, a long day’s walk in the story Over the Green Hills. This village seems to be a tight community where strangers can stop to talk on the road, ask for help or sell some of their goods. Visits with friends or family last for many days at a time. Gifts are freely given and received often by these friendly and generous people. Some interesting events that are mentioned and shown through the illustrations are Grandma’s pet mongoose, her living in a pink rondavel (which is an African hut), villagers eating ripe prickly pears picked from nearby patches, and Grandma’s hobby of playing songs with pennywhistles. These interesting aspects of the South African culture give readers a good sense of the environment and the character of the country. In Bringing Asha Home, the Indian holiday “Rahki” is described as a celebration of the special bond between brothers and sisters. This event is special because sisters give bracelets to their brother as a show of love and intimacy. The children’s books mentioned so far have given readers much factual information of their respective countries. Just as a picture book shares information through subtle but engaging means, I wanted to teach a bit of the Korean culture through Goodnight Sister without being dull or overwhelming.

The concept of families having combinations of different cultures is an important one. In Mary Cummings’ book, Three Names of Me, Ada speaks about how

she is a cultural mixture of her birthplace and of the United States. Ada shares the things she likes about her first home - China, (foggy mountains, water buffaloes, and her red silk outfit with the mandarin collar), as well as the things she likes about her second home – the United States, (hot dogs, roller coasters, and playing soccer). “What I am is a Chinese girl, and my first country has the Great Wall that is famous all around the world. What I am is an American girl who speaks English and knows a few words of Chinese.” She is a mixture of the two cultures and they help to define who she is. “My first name I heard long ago, with love, so it is still there... My second name is from the land I was born in... My third name is... full of love... in this place, this family.” Her old life in China and her new life in the United States are all important parts of who she is. Just as Three Names of Me addresses the issues of being bicultural, Almond Cookies & Dragon Well Tea also raises the idea that a very traditional Chinese family like Nancy’s isn’t all that different from Erica and her family who are Caucasian. When Erica visits Nancy’s home, she learns and experiences many new things about the Chinese culture. Even though Nancy enjoys doing traditional Chinese activities, the reader also learns that she also loves going to the park and feeding the pigeons, playing hide and seek as well as red light/green light/one/two/three, and spending time with her best friend.

In Tree of Cranes by Allen Say, a Japanese family celebrates the American tradition of Christmas by decorating an evergreen tree with twinkling lights and colorful ornaments, and placing presents under the decorated tree for opening on Christmas day. In the story, the Japanese young boy ponders why his mother is acting strange as she digs up a pine tree from the garden in the falling snow. Later,

his mother shares with him how she used to celebrate this holiday when she lived in America. The Christmas tree they adorn together is a unique and beautiful one with lit candles and silver paper cranes as the hanging ornaments. This family's adaptation of the Christmas tree symbolically represents the two cultures of the young boy's mother. In another story, Jalapeño Bagels by Natasha Wing, a boy named Pablo shares with his class his parents' original jalapeño bagels which are a mixture of his mother's Mexican heritage as well as his father's Jewish heritage. All of these stories narrate different ways people exhibit different cultures. In Goodnight Sister, I wanted to show the ways my family exhibits our Korean American culture. June in the story mentions how she loves to eat Korean pancakes with cinnamon and brown sugar which then leads Sophie to rave about her mother's famous chocolate chip pancakes. I believe it's very important for some stories to highlight the idea that there are no cookie cutter families, everyone is unique and each family has its own culture and distinctiveness. What families have in common is the love they have for each other.

The second theme, adoption, is an important one in modern society. In the book Beginnings: How Families Come to Be by Virginia Kroll, the six short stories each propose different reasons families choose to adopt. Some families choose to adopt because they long for children and feel as if something is missing in their lives. Other families desire to help children in need who don't have permanent homes and loving families of their own. In Todd Parr's book, We Belong Together: A Book About Adoption and Families, the book states many different reasons why families belong together. In the end, the readers understand the message the author is sending



about how love holds a family together. “There are lots of different ways to make a family. It just takes love. Share your home, and share you heart. Love, Todd.” The last reason some families choose to adopt is their loyalty towards their family members, which was the case for my family. When my parents were told of my uncle’s terminal illness, they knew they had a big decision to make. My parents knew that the children would get the care and support they needed if they joined our family. In Three Names of Me, Ada is adopted into a loving family and is happy and healthy. However she also talks about her sad feelings about looking different from her Caucasian parents. She doesn’t like it when people stare at them and whisper. She also wonders whether her birth parents think about her. Do they remember her? What was the name they had chosen for her? These are real issues adopted children may grapple with as they adjust to their new life and come to terms with their evolving identity. A Korean boy named Kim Moo Yong is adopted by a Caucasian couple and brought to America in the story Tall Boy’s Journey by Joanna Halpert Kraus. As the boy is bombarded with his unfamiliar and scary new life, he attempts to make sense of everything. He soon feels that the only solution is to escape and get himself back home to Korea. As the boy slowly begins to understand and trust his new parents, he comes to love them and his new life in America. June and Chris both had to make many adjustments when they moved to the United States in Goodnight Sister. Their acclimation process can be seen through their performing of the song Amazing Grace. At the beginning of the song June and Chris sounded unsure and shaky. As they continued they grew more confident and louder. The words of the song also correspond to the lives of the two siblings. They

had just lost their father, but have begun to find peace and acceptance in their new home.

The last theme of sibling relationships is seen in My Mei Mei by Ed Young where the two adopted sisters, Antonia and “Mei Mei” (little sister), play together, explore together, fight together, and even face the unknown together. As siblings, they think of each other and take care of the other when needed. Patricia Polacco the author of My Rotten Red Headed Older Brother writes about how the brothers compete with each other all the time. Patricia’s image of her brother of the book’s title is his being a rotten red headed older brother. He always teases and aggravates her, winning every race or competition no matter how hard she tries to beat him. Patricia’s feelings change when she is injured and her brother carries her home and fetches the doctor to take care of her. This story shows how sibling relationships can be more loving than they may appear. What it means to be a sibling is being there for the other when he or she needs you the most. Similarly in The Pain and the Great One, written by Judy Blume, the older sister and younger brother fight and annoy each other every chance they get. These two seem to butt heads more than they get along! By the end of the book, the reader understands that although the two siblings complain about each other and fight all the time, when the other sibling is not there, they are missed. In The Tale of Pip & Squeak by Kate Duke, the two brother mice do not get along with each other and have very different interests. Whenever they are together, they attempt to outdo each other in every possible way. When the time comes to plan and prepare for their annual midwinter party, they make a huge mess. They soon realize that they must collaborate in order to have a successful party. In

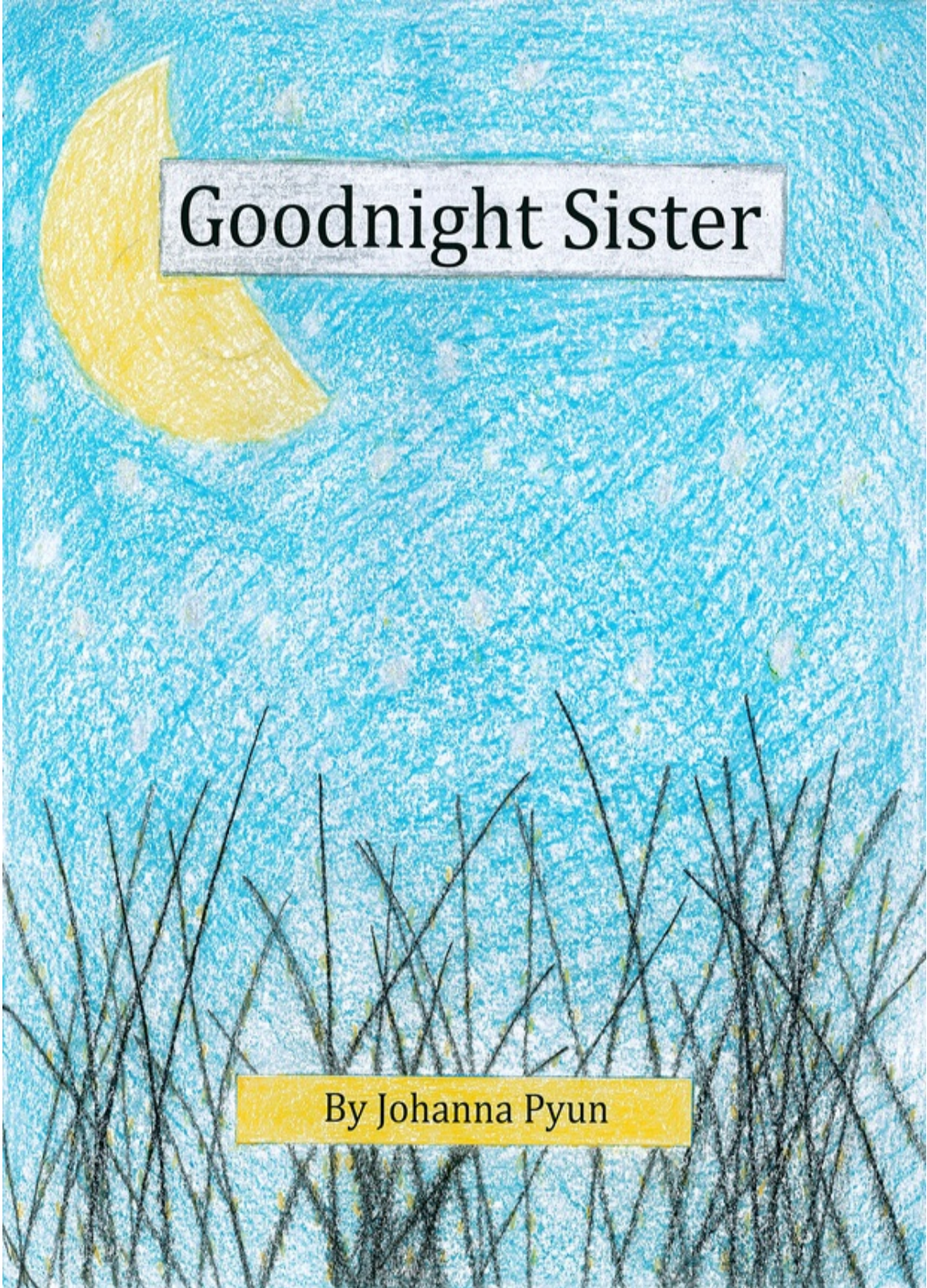
the end, the celebration turns out to be the best one they ever had. In all of these stories, two siblings are in situations where they are at odds with each other, and at the story's end they come to the realization that the other sibling isn't as bad as they originally thought. In Jon Muth's Zen Shorts, this realization occurs with the help of a giant panda bear. When the bear named Stillwater shares a short story with a young boy named Karl, Karl's feeling of anger towards his older brother diminishes when he is able to understand Stillwater's different perspective. They come to the conclusion that carrying the heavy burden of anger weighs heavily on one's shoulders. Laying down the burden by forgiving the other person brings peace and lightness to Karl. In Goodnight Sister, Sophie's argument with June is put into a different perspective after speaking with her father.

“Sophie, having siblings is like having two pointy rocks. As they rub against each other again and again, the sharp edges become smooth. You and *Jeesun* are like those two rocks.”

When Sophie envisions two rocks becoming smoother only after rubbing against each other, she was able to understand that siblings become closer as they understand and accept each other's differences. Without the disagreements and struggles, they would not be able to grow more mature and develop better characters.

Keeping in mind the central themes I wished to touch on, I also developed Goodnight Sister with the purpose of adding to the limited literature of the Korean American culture. By sharing my family's story of adoption, I hope to touch the reader, and lastly, to give the reader fuel to reexamine him or herself in the midst of

family changes and ambiguities, disagreements with others, or struggles within oneself.

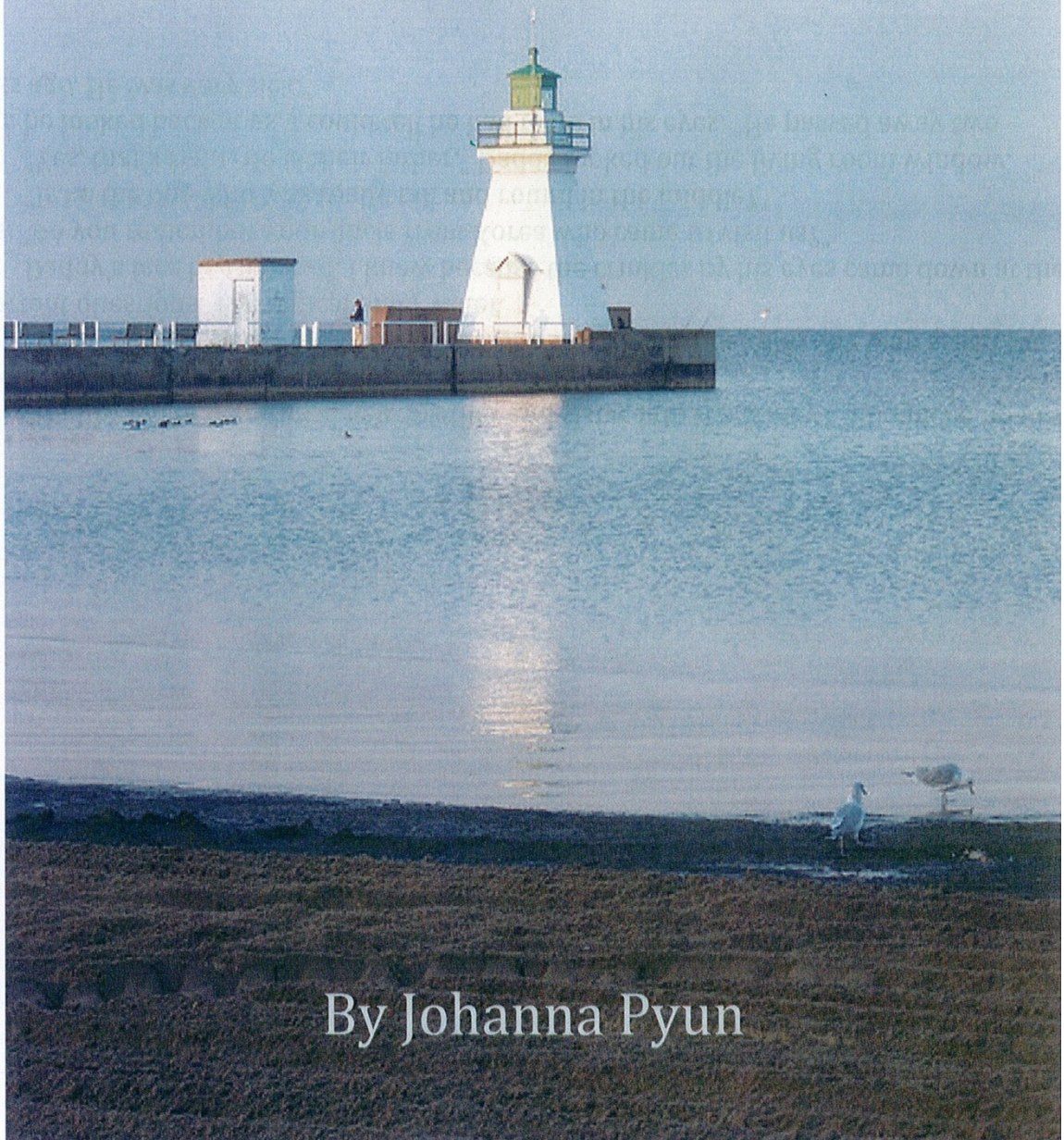


# Goodnight Sister

By Johanna Pyun



# Goodnight Sister



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## Author's Note

Some words and dialogue are italicized to show they were said in Korean but have been translated into English.



## - June -

“Daddy, we’re adopting a new brother and sister into the family?” I bounced up in my seat. My wish was finally coming true!

“Who are they Dad?” my sister asked. She was always the calm one who asked the important questions. The typical older sister.

Daddy’s face became sad, I knew because the crinkles by his eyes came down at the sides. “Do you remember your uncle from Korea who came to visit us?”

“Is he the one who was really tall and round in the middle?”

“Yes, that’s right. He is their father.” Daddy looked off out the living room window. When he looked back at us, I could tell he had tears in his eyes. “He passed away two weeks ago. He was very sick.”





I remember how Uncle had given Big Sister and me a big bear hug at the airport when we said goodbye. It was hard to imagine someone so big and strong not here anymore.

“He was their only parent,” Daddy explained. “We thought it best if we adopted them into our family and brought them here from South Korea. What do you girls think?” Daddy came over to sit between us.

Big Sister looked around and said, “We better make room for them before they come.”

I sprang up and raced across the house yelling, “This needs to go! If we move this, then we can make room for... and where are they going to sleep?! If we buy a bunk bed then...” I think I heard laughter from the living room but I wasn’t too sure.







## - August -

The day was finally here! We ended up moving to a bigger house two blocks away, and now we were ready to welcome them into our new home. The three of us were driving to pick up Mom, our new brother *Inho*, and sister *Jeesun*, from the John F. Kennedy Airport. Mom had gone to Korea to help them pack and fly here safely. We couldn't wait to see everyone. "Daddy, *Jeesun* and *Inho* are going to start school with us in September right?"

"Yes, you're right Sophie," Daddy replied; "You and Anna are going to have to take good care of *Jeesun* and *Inho*. It's going to be scary for them to live in a new place and learn a new language."

"Okay Daddy!" we sang together.



I started to think about everything we would do together. *Jeesun* and I would share each other's clothes, and we would talk late into the night about school and friends. *Inho* and I would go bike riding together around the neighborhood and play catch in the backyard. Big Sister was too big to fit my clothes and she only liked reading books at home. Now I was going to have a sister my own age and a younger brother to play with!

We waited outside the doors to the baggage claim and jumped whenever we saw the doors open. When we finally saw Mom walking out with our brother and sister, we yelled and waved our arms. *Jeesun* and *Inho* were both wearing khaki shorts and bright colored T-shirts. They smiled and waved as they walked towards us.

*"Hi!"* I said to them in Korean, *"My name is Sophie and this is Anna Big Sister."*

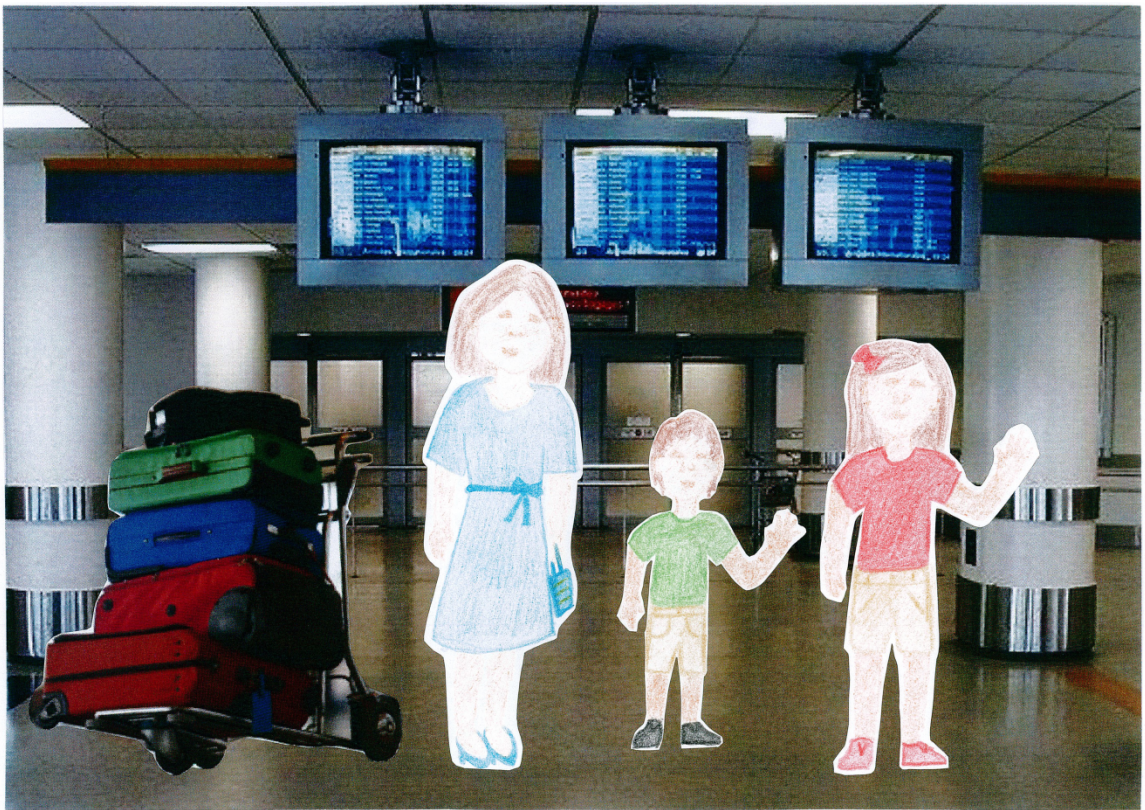
*"Hello Big Sisters,"* they said together.

*"Jeesun, you don't have to call me Big Sister. We are the same age! Call me Sophie,"* I insisted.

*"Okay... Sophie."* *Jeesun* answered shyly.

*"Let's go everyone! I'm hungry for your mother's food! It's been a long time,"* Daddy exclaimed. We all laughed and started walking to the parking lot.

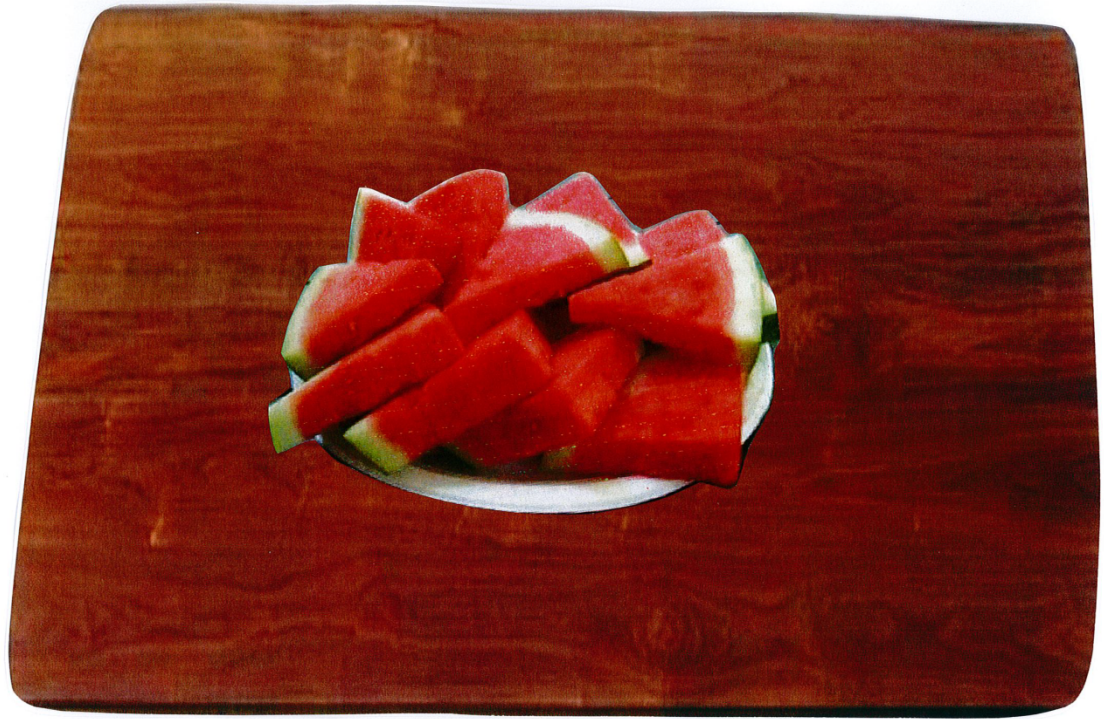




That evening, Mommy made a wonderful Korean feast for the whole family. There was rice and seaweed soup, grilled marinated beef, and five different side dishes including Kimchi, of course. Every Korean meal needs Kimchi, a spicy pickled cabbage dish, to make the meal complete.







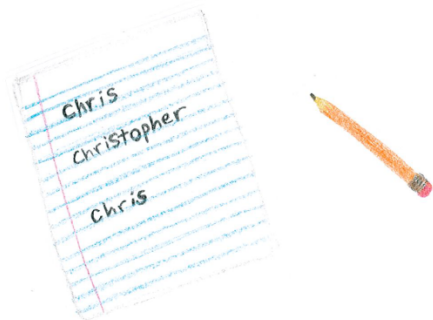
While we ate watermelon for dessert, Big Sister and I said all the different English names we could think of, so *Jeesun* and *Inho* could pick the names they wanted for themselves. "What about Harry? Or John?" I asked.

*Inho* thought for a minute but shook his head.

"I like the name Christopher. We could call you Chris for short," Big Sister suggested. He whispered the name and smiled. Everyone tried out the name and approved.

"I already know the name I want, call me June," *Jeesun* said.

"June... Chris.. I like them," Daddy replied. "But Christopher, you better practice writing your name, it has eleven letters in it!"



*"What's Korea like?" I asked June. We were both lying in bed later that night, listening to each other's voices in the dark.*

*"In Seoul, there are food stands in the streets. They sell fish cakes, vegetable rice rolls, spicy rice cake dishes, and my favorite- pancakes with melted brown sugar and cinnamon in the middle," June answered.*

I knew that Seoul was the capital city of South Korea, but I couldn't imagine all those delicious foods sold in one food stand. *"I tried those pancakes with brown sugar," I replied, "They are just as good as the chocolate chip pancakes Mommy makes for us on special days. Maybe we can ask her to make them for us tomorrow morning!"*





I waited but there was no reply. *"June? Are you sleeping?"* I asked.

*"Huh? Oh I'm sorry,"* June answered.

*"It's okay, go to sleep June,"* I replied.

*"Ok, goodnight,"* June said in English.

I was surprised when June didn't speak in Korean. I realized she knew more English than I thought!

*"Buenas noches,"* I replied.

*"Sophie, what does that mean?"* June asked.

*"It's goodnight in Spanish. I learned it in school,"* I answered.

*"Oh I see." June paused for a moment and then said, "Oyasuminasai."*

*"What does that mean June?"* I asked.

*"It is goodnight in Japanese,"* she replied, *"We started to learn Japanese in school before I came to America."*

We had to repeat the new words many times until we memorized them. But after we did, we were very excited to use them.

*"Oyasuminasai June,"* I whispered.

*"Buenas noches Sophie,"* she whispered back.

Buenas noches  
Sophie

Oyasuminasai  
June



## - September -

*"What do you want to do first?" I asked Chris and June. "We could go on the monkey bars, or the swings, or what about the big slide?" I was so excited to play with Chris and June at the park, I didn't care where we started.*

*"Sophie, could we go and see the water down by the shore?" June asked.*

*"The water? Oh sure, we could do that," I replied. I was surprised to hear they wanted to go to the shore rather than play in the jungle gym. We've been living by the port for so long we never went by the water anymore.*

*"In Seoul, when we wanted to go to the beach, we had to drive for three hours to get there," June said, "It's amazing we have one so close to home now."*

*"Really? Wow, I didn't know that. We can come here a lot if you want," I replied. "Let's go! I'll show you the lighthouse. It's really pretty!"*



*"Hey little brother," I said going into his room. "Want to go bike riding with me? I'll show you the shortcut to get to school."*

Chris didn't look up from the Gameboy I let him borrow the other day. *"No, it's ok,"* he said distractedly.

*"Then do you want to go fly my kite at the park?"* I asked, *"I just got it for my birthday this year."*

Chris shook his head, *"You should ask Jeesun Big Sister, maybe she will want to go,"* he answered.





That's strange, I thought he would be excited to go to the park with me. I shrugged and went into our room. "June, *do you want to go to the park with me? If we go now, we might see the sun setting by the shore.*"

June was sitting at her table, writing on a piece of paper. "No thanks," she replied. "I'm writing a letter to my friend in Korea. I have so much to tell her about America."

"Okay," I said looking down at the floor. I wish they would come out and play with me. I guess I'll just go see if mom needs help with dinner.



*"Jeesun! Inho! You need to practice playing your flute and violin. Your recital is this Sunday at church,"* Mom reminded them.

"Okay." June and Chris went to get their instruments to practice in the living room. After they tuned and readied their instruments, they got their music sheets and played Amazing Grace for us.

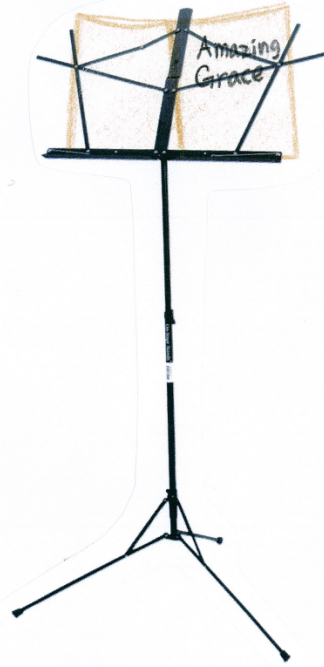
The two instruments started off unsure and a bit shaky, but as the song went on, their sounds became louder and more confident.

"Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch like me...  
I once was lost but now am found,  
was blind, but now, I see."

I quietly sang along as the song finished and everyone stood up to clap for June and Chris.

*"That was beautiful,"* Mom beamed. June and Chris smiled and each took a bow.





Later that evening, I looked through my drawers for the white shirt I saved for special occasions. *"Here it is! June, why don't you wear this for your recital? I think it should fit you."*

*"It's okay Sophie. I will just wear this black shirt Mom bought for me,"* she replied.

*"June, I think this shirt will look better. You should wear this instead!"*

*"No, I don't want to! I just want to wear my black shirt!"* June exclaimed.

*"But I want you to wear my shirt! How come you don't want to wear my shirt?!"* I yelled. Mom and dad came into the room and asked what was going on.



“Honey, why don’t you come with me?” Daddy asked. He held my hand and led me to the living room. I was crying and telling him how June doesn’t want to share clothes with me.

He then said, “Sophie, having siblings is like having two pointy rocks. As they rub against each other again and again, the sharp edges become smooth. You and Jeesun are like those two rocks.”

“Daddy, we are becoming smoother rocks now, aren't we? We are becoming real sisters.”

“Yes you are, my daughter,” he replied giving me a hug.



When I went back to our room, I saw that June was already in her bed facing the wall. "June? *Are you sleeping?*" There was silence. I got into my bed and wished that she would turn around.

*"I'm sorry I yelled at you. You don't have to wear my clothes if you don't want to,"* I said. June still didn't say anything. I pulled my blanket up to my chin and wished she wouldn't be angry at me anymore.

"Oyasuminasai," I whispered. It was quiet except for the soft sound of the fog horn, coming from the docks.

"Buenas noches," she whispered back. Then she turned around and smiled at me. I smiled my half-moon smile back and knew we were going to be okay.

Buenas noches

Oyasuminasai



## Applications

Reading Goodnight Sister to my Kindergarten class of 5 to 6 year olds was an exciting experience for me and for my students. We had been getting to know each other for seven months now. This story was the first time the children learned that my younger brother and sister were adopted. They asked repeatedly whether this story was true: “Is this whole entire story non-fiction?”, “Is this really real?”, and “Is it actually true that your brother and sister had a concert at your church?” Getting a sneak peek into the life of their teacher was an experience they enjoyed, and they took full advantage of it! Their curiosity led to an onslaught of questions that included “Who are you in the story?”, “What are your sisters’ names in real life?”, “What is your dad’s real name?”, and “Who is your uncle?” It worked out nicely that we had already studied and read lots of books about different types of families and families with adopted children beforehand. For example, Norma Simon’s All Kinds of Families and Nina Pellegrini’s Families are Different spoke about traditional families, single parent families, families with adopted children, families with divorced parents, and even grandparents who became the children’s parents. Other ways the children were able to connect and absorb the story were being familiar with certain parts of the book; such as, having been to the John F. Kennedy airport, having heard and sung Amazing Grace, and even having tasted some of the different types of Korean food mentioned throughout the story. One student had brought in Kimbab for the whole class as a part of his family sharing earlier in the year.

My experience reading this story aloud for the first time raised questions in my mind about some of the content and the story's length. Should I have just focused on the themes of adoption and sibling relationships instead of including the Korean culture as well? By using the honorific terms for older siblings, introducing different types of Korean food, and using Korean names along with English names, children needed to absorb a lot of information. Perhaps that should have been a theme for another separate book? The main purpose of writing Goodnight Sister was to share my family's story of adoption and the relationship I developed with my adopted sister. If I had decided to focus on these two themes, I could have delved deeper into the true makeup of my family. However, I believed that including more information about my family would have made the story too complicated to understand. My mother and father had divorced when I was in the third grade. The mother in my story is really my stepmother whose brother was the one who passed away. Therefore my adopted siblings are really my step-cousins and my stepmother's niece and nephew. In contemplating how best to teach and relay the main message, I wished to focus on the adoption circumstances within my family and how to build stronger relationships with family members. What had pushed me to include the Korean culture was my desire to share how my family is a fusion of the Korean as well as the American cultures. Having been born and raised in the United States, my older sister and I couldn't help but influence my parents to become more Americanized while my parents influenced us with their Korean way of life. By mentioning the different traditional Korean foods, the honorific terms used for older siblings, and using some Korean names in the story, I hoped to offer a

glimpse of the Korean culture to the readers who aren't familiar with it, and to give those readers who are already familiar, a way to connect with the characters in the story.

### **Suggestions for Teachers**

One way a teacher might use this book in his or her classroom is by reading it at the beginning of a cultural study. The teacher and children can discuss what culture is, and how culture is represented in Sophie's family. The music that they listen to and perform, the types of food they eat, and how they are dressed, are all different aspects of their culture. Sophie's family is a "typical" and unique example of a bicultural family, a mixture of Korean and American cultures. Their story can connect well with children whose families are a makeup of different ethnicities, religions, traditions, and backgrounds. A more specific cultural study can guide the class to recognize the different aspects of Korean culture as seen through the daily life of this family (which is a more modern representation). Subsequently the class can study traditional Korean folklore, where students can learn about the different traditions, attire, and lifestyle, of ancient Korea. For example, Shirley Climo's The Korean Cinderella or Nina Jaffe's Older Brother, Younger Brother are some appropriate storybooks.

Another way a teacher might use this story is for an adoption study. Goodnight Sister can foster a discussion of why families choose to adopt. We Belong Together: A book about adoption and families by Todd Parr and Beginnings: How families come to be by Virginia Kroll, are relevant books to read as well. Inho and



Jeesun are adopted into their aunt's family because their father passed away and they didn't have someone who could support them and take care of them. Some families adopt to make a difference in their lives (to fill a void or to have a bigger family), and some families adopt to make a difference in the children's lives. In thinking about adoption, the teacher can facilitate a conversation about what makes a family, a family. Is looking all alike what makes a family, a family? The students can share what characteristics are and aren't important in defining a family. The qualities of love, forgiveness, trust, and acceptance can be some of the resounding ideas.

Lastly, a teacher may use this story in a study of peacemaking. Resolving conflicts and forgiving others, are a large part of everyone's life. Whether it is between parents, siblings, friends, classmates, or even strangers, learning to keep the peace is an ongoing lesson that lasts throughout our lives. The teacher can have the students brainstorm constructive ways they can resolve arguments with others: listen to his or her side of the story before sharing yours, walk away and resume the conversation when you are feeling calmer, ask a friend or an adult for help, or learn to put yourself in the other person's shoes. In Goodnight Sister, Inho and Jeesun haven't been a part of Sophie's family for long. Soon Sophie learns how to forgive and resolve conflicts with her new sister by looking at their conflict from a different perspective. "Sophie, having siblings is like having two pointy rocks. As they rub against each other again and again, the sharp edges become smooth. You and Jeesun are like those two rocks". When two rocks grind against each other, it doesn't feel or

sound very nice, but after you brush off the dust and take a good look at them, they have become more beautiful to the eyes and to the touch.

Goodnight Sister is a good option for five to seven-year-olds, and can be read aloud either in a whole group or in a half group. The teacher can read and pause to check for comprehension or to discuss the story's different themes as they come up. Two things for the teacher to keep in mind are the way time is structured in the book and the italics that are used in certain parts of the dialogue and specific references. The story takes place during a span of four months. It starts out in the month of June (as seen in the heading), skips to August when June and Chris arrive, and then finishes in September. As for the italics, they are used when the person speaks in Korean although the dialogue is written in English, or when pronouns are used in Korean. For example, *Big Sister* is used with italics because it is always said in Korean, "Unnie". And after *Jeesun* and *Inho* join Sophie's family, whenever they speak or other people speak to them, the dialogue is italicized since they only used their Korean language.

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