



"I was a stranger in a strange land" – Books and Teaching Resources for Jewish Children and Tweens on Immigration & Refugees

Key:

- 🌍 Sephardi, Mizrahi, or Ethiopian Jewish immigration story
- 🏠 Set in North America in the 1940s
- 👨‍👩‍👧‍👦 Multigenerational family story
- 🌐 Universal (not explicitly Jewish)
- ✓ True stories or about real people

[Across So Many Seas](#) 🌍 🏠 by Ruth Behar

Ages 9–13

Beginning with the Inquisition and the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492 and spanning over 500 years, this powerful historical novel by Behar relates the journeys and discoveries of four young girls from different generations of the same family.

Resources: [Educator Guide](#) (Penguin Random House) | [Author Interview](#) (Kveller) | [Book Playlist](#) (Ruth Behar)

[Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909](#) ✓ by Michelle Markel. Illustrated by Melissa Sweet.

Ages 5–9

Just because Clara Lemlich is a young immigrant doesn't mean she's going to let factory owners treat workers poorly. After all, equality and a fair shot is what America is all about—and no one understands that better than this brave girl.

Resources: [Reading Guide](#) (PJ Library) | [Jewish Hero Video](#) (PJ Library)

[Butterflies Belong Here: A Story of One Idea, Thirty Kids, and a World of Butterflies](#) 🌐 by Deborah Hopkinson. Illustrated by Meilo So.

Ages 5–9

In this moving story of community conservation, a recently immigrated girl finds a home in a new place and a way to help other small travelers. This book is about the real change children can make in conservation and advocacy. *Butterflies Belong Here* is proof that even the smallest of us are capable of amazing transformations.

Resources: [Book Guides, Activities & Lessons](#) (TeachingBooks)

[Call Me Gebyanesh](#) 🌐 ✓ by Arlene Rosenfeld Schenker and Gebyanesh Addisu. Illustrated by Chiara Fedele.

Ages 4–8

Gebyanesh loves the things that her family brought with them from Ethiopia. But when her teacher in Israel says "Gebyanesh" is too difficult to pronounce, it's hard to feel like she belongs in her new home. This true story about finding the courage to be yourself will resonate with anyone who's ever felt different.

Resources: [Book Review](#) (Sydney Taylor Shmooze)

[Emma's Poem: The Voice of the Statue of Liberty](#) ✓ by Linda Glaser. Illustrated by Claire A Nivola.

Ages 4-8

Emma Lazarus was a wealthy Jewish American family in 1880's New York City moved by the plight of immigrants. To raise money for a pedestal for the Statue of Liberty, she wrote the poem "The New Colossus" and became the voice of the Statue of Liberty.

Resources: [Book Guides, Activities & Lessons](#) (TeachingBooks) - Including Discussion Guide from Houghton Mifflin Harcourt | [Interview with Linda Glaser](#) (TC Jewfolk)

[Mr. Katz and Me](#) ✓ by Marc Kornblatt. Illustrated by Nanette Regan.

Ages 6–8

At 81 years old, Mr. Katz is very different from the other students who come to Sarah's father for bar mitzvah lessons: he is fulfilling his dream of finally becoming a bar mitzvah, something Russian religious persecution prevented when he was a child. Sarah isn't sure what to make of this clumsy and forgetful man with a Russian accent, but she loves listening to his beautiful singing. As Sarah gets to know Mr. Katz better, she soon realizes that she's made a friend—one who might have something to teach her, too.

Resources: [Author Video - Book Walk](#) (Marc Kornblatt)

[Refugee](#) 🌿 by Alan Gratz

Ages 12-14

A Jewish boy in 1930's Nazi Germany, a Cuban girl in 1994, a Syrian boy in 2015: all three go on harrowing journeys in search of refuge. This action-packed novel tackles topics both timely and timeless: courage, survival, and the quest for home. The book culminates in bit-ter-sweet out-comes for all three, Josef from Germany, Isabel from Cuba, and Mah-moud from Syria.

Resources: [Discussion Guide and Writing Prompts](#) (Scholastic)

[Room for One More](#) 🧑 by Monique Polak.

Ages 8–12

Twelve-year-old Rosetta and her sisters get a ready-made brother when her family welcomes teenage refugee Isaac Guttman into their Montreal home. Rosetta and Esther are less than thrilled to share a bedroom, but soon talkative Rosetta and reticent Isaac form a strong bond.

Resources: [Educator's Guide](#) (Kar-Ben)

[A Scarf for Keiko](#) 🧑 by Ann Malaspina. Illustrated by Merrilee Liddiard.

Ages 5–9

It's 1942, and Los Angeles neighborhood Boyle Heights is home to Jewish American Sam and his Japanese American friend Keiko. Some kids at school don't want anything to do with Keiko because the Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor. When Keiko's family is forced to move to a camp for Japanese Americans, can Sam find a way to demonstrate his friendship?

Resources: [Educator's Guide](#) (Kar-Ben)

[Shoham's Bangle](#) 🌐 by Sarah Sassoon. Illustrated by Noa Kelner.

Ages 4–8

Shoham and her family must leave everything behind when they emigrate from Iraq to Israel, including her prized bangle. But Shoham's Nana Aziza has prepared a special surprise to make their new country feel like home.

Resources: [Educator's Guide](#) (Kar-Ben)

[The Suitcase](#) 🦊 by Chris Naylor-Ballesteros. Illustrated by Chris Naylor-Ballesteros.

Ages 3–7

When a new stranger arrives in town with a single suitcase, he doesn't receive a warm welcome. Bird, Rabbit, and Fox wonder what's inside the stranger's suitcase, and they're not sure they believe his answers. Soon they'll learn a lesson about just how much we carry with us—and how much a warm welcome can mean.

Resources: [Reading Guide](#) (PJ Library) | [Author Video](#) (YouTube)

[The Welcome Chair](#) 🌳 ✓ by Rosemary Wells. Illustrated by Jerry Pinkney.

Ages 5–9

Based in part on a 100-year-old family journal, Rosemary Wells brings to life a story that the diary's fragile pages tell. It's the story of a wooden rocking chair handmade in about 1825 by her great-great-grandfather, an immigrant Jewish boy who made his way to America from Germany in the early 1800s.

Resources: [Curriculum Guide](#) (Simon & Schuster)