



Book Review: Grandfather's Journey

Written by Allen Say

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Set in two different parts of the world, *Grandfather's Journey* begins with one man's voyage from Japan to America. At the beginning of the journey, the young man, the author's grandfather, travels to America to see the other side of the world. Along the way, he meets new faces and discovers the beauty of a foreign country, deciding to settle in San Francisco. He loves California, yet he yearns to go back to his home country. After many years pass, his family joins him as he sets sail yet again for the return home. Time passes; war tears the country apart, and the grandfather longs to see California one last time. Although the grandfather never makes it back, his grandson does. The grandfather and grandson share a common perspective, "the moment I am in one country, I am homesick for the other" (p.31).

The pictures provide a vivid reality into the grandfather's cross-cultural experience. At the beginning, he is depicted in his traditional Japanese attire, but adapts to "European" apparel once he crosses the ocean. Influenced by his surroundings, he once again returns to Japan and adapts back to his environment with his Japanese attire.

The reader gains insights into immigration for Japanese people before World War II. The theme of immigration is embedded in the story and the heart of the book reaches out to those who travel from one place to another only to find that part of their heart is longing for the other. Many of the events in the book occur before World War II, but there is an underlying theme of the effects of war. Before the war, the grandfather raised many songbirds, a symbol of peace and harmony, and after the war he never keeps another songbird. The book highlights the impact of war and the sadness of loss.

Allen Say delivers an authentic, three-generational account of his family's cross-cultural experience through broad colors of illustration and writing. Both as the author and illustrator, Say connects the setting and characters to real people and places in time. The story is not only a personal collection of his family timeline, but a love of two countries. Born in Yokohama, Japan, Allen Say immigrated to the United States when he was sixteen. He lives in San Francisco and continues to write and illustrate children books. Some of his related work that offers an informative author study includes, *The Boy in the Garden* (2010), *Tree of Cranes*, (2009), *A River Dream* (1993), *El Chino* (1996), and *The Bicycle Man*, (1989). More information can be found on Say's website.

Camille Dittmore, Texas Woman's University, Denton, TX

