

A Teacher's Guide to

Just Right Family

An Adoption Story



Silvia Lopez

pictures by
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Guide prepared by the author

Ages 4–8 // Grades PreK–3

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About *Just Right Family: An Adoption Story*

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Classroom Guide

This classroom guide is designed for students in kindergarten through second grade but can be adapted for older readers. It was created according to current relevant content standards (see last page of guide for details). The guide should be tailored to fit the teacher's aims, the grade levels, and the abilities of individual students.



Meili, who is six years old and adopted from China, learns that her parents are going to adopt a baby from Haiti. She's not happy. Why do they need a new baby? Their family is just right as it is. As Meili learns more about her new sibling and the importance of being a big sister, will she realize that a new addition can be just right for their family too?

About Silvia Lopez

Silvia Lopez was ten and spoke only Spanish when she arrived in Miami, Florida, from her native Cuba. Years later she had majored in English literature and gone on to earn a library degree—her true love.

After years of sharing books with hundreds of children in school libraries, Silvia began putting her own stories down on paper. Her first publication, a chapter book biography, was followed by six bilingual ebooks. One of these, *Zunzuncito: Un Cuento del Pájaro Abeja Cubano* won the International Latino Book Award as Best Children's Picture ebook of 2017. *Just Right Family: An Adoption Story* is her first hardcover book.

Silvia likes to write about anything and everything that catches her imagination and thinks might catch those of young readers. She loves listening to audio books and is trained in bilingual narration. She also loves collecting quotes. Silvia still lives in Miami, and you can visit her at www.silvia_lopez_books.com.

About Ziyue Chen

Born deaf and raised on the sunny island of Singapore, Ziyue Chen graduated with honors from the Ringling College of Art and Design with a bachelor's degree in illustration and a minor in visual development. She previously worked as an animator before she discovered her keen interest in storytelling through illustration. In her spare time, Ziyue enjoys reading, sketching, swimming, and spending time with her loved ones. Visit her online at www.ziyuechen.com.

Prereading Activities: Analyzing and Predicting

- Read the names of the author and illustrator. What did the author do? What did the illustrator do?
- Read the title. Do you know what the term “adoption” means? Are any of you adopted? Do you know someone who is?
- Why do you think a family would want to adopt a child? (**Note: Experts advise explaining that a family may want more children and sometimes a child needs a new home.**)
- Show the cover illustration. What do you notice about the family?
- Why do you think Meili, the older child, does not look so happy? What do you believe she may be thinking?
- Show the illustration on the title page. What is different about this picture from the one on the cover? Where is the parents’ attention focused?
- Can you predict what may happen in this story just by comparing the two illustrations?

During Reading: Examining Illustrations

Study the picture of Meili right after Mama and Papa tell her they are going to adopt a baby (p.9). How did the illustrator show how Meili was feeling?

Can you tell something about Grandma’s personality from her face on the computer and her conversation with Meili (pp.18–19)?



After Reading:

Comprehension and Application

- Name three activities Meili, Mama, and Papa do together. (Answer: swings, ducks and geese, read books) What activities do you like to do with your family?
- What is Meili's favorite story about? (Answer: how she was adopted) Do you have a favorite story to listen to/read at night?
- From what country did Mama and Papa adopt Meili? (Answer: China)
- What does Meili think the surprise is? (Answer: a puppy) Do you have a pet? If not, what kind of pet would you like to have?
- At first, how does Meili feel about the new baby? (Answer: not happy) Do you have younger brothers or sisters? Do you remember how you felt when you were told you would have one?
- What does Meili's teacher say that makes her smile a little? (Answer: she'll make an awesome big sister and she's very special) How do you feel when your teacher praises you? Do you remember something he/she said that made you feel good?
- What country is the baby coming from? (Answer: Haiti)
- What does Mama tell Meili that upsets her very much? (Answer: they have to travel to Haiti to get the baby)
- What is Meili's favorite color? (Answer: blue) What color does she pick for the baby's room? (Answer: pink) What is your favorite color? What is your second favorite color?
- Where are the stars on both Meili's and the baby's maps? (Answer: China, Haiti, and where their own house is)
- What does Grandma buy Meili? (Answer: two new dresses to match her blue shoes)
- What does Meili ask Grandma if they can also buy? (Answer: a pink dress for the baby)
- At the airport, why does Meili say sometimes Grandma's hard to figure out? (Answer: Grandma says she's happy but then starts to cry) Why do you think she is crying?
- What is the baby's name? (Answer: Sophie) Do you have brothers and/or sisters? What are their names?
- What does Sophie do when Meili comes close? (Answer: takes her finger and doesn't let go)
- What does Meili promise Sophie she will do? (Answer: help push her on the swings, keep the geese away) How do you help your younger brothers and/or sisters?
- What story does Meili tell Sophie that night? (Answer: how Mama and Papa flew over the sea to adopt her, how they all looked in their hearts and saw her there, how she is just right for their family) Do you tell your younger siblings stories?
- How do Meili's feelings about being a big sister change from the beginning to the end of the book?

Extension Activities

Drawing and Writing

Draw a picture of one or more things you and your family do together. Depending on the grade level or class, students can simply draw, place captions, or write one or more sentences to accompany their drawings. Share work with the class.

Social Studies

Show students a world map and locate Haiti, China, and your own hometown.

Timeline

For grades 2 and up, number the following events in the order they happen in the story:

	Grandma buys dresses for Meili and the baby
	Mama and Papa tell Meili they have a surprise
	Mama shows Meili where Haiti is on a map
	Meili tells Sophie her own story
	Mama and Papa leave Meili with Grandma
	On the way to school, Meili asks Papa why the baby can't stay with her own family
1	Meili enjoys doing things together with Mama and Papa
	Mama and Papa arrive at the airport
	Meili and Grandma talk on the computer
	Sophie takes Meili's finger and doesn't let go

Resources

Adoption Books for Young Children

- Bashista, Adrienne Ehlert. *Mishka: An Adoption Tale*. Pittsboro: DRT Press, 2007.
- Bergren, Lisa Tawn. *God Found Us You*. New York: Harper Collins, 2009.
- Curtis, Jamie Lee. *Tell Me Again About the Night I Was Born*. New York: Harper Collins, 2000.
- dePaola, Tomie. *A New Barker in the House*. New York: G. P. Putnam & Sons, 2002.
- Dyckman, Ame. *Wolfie the Bunny*. Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 2015.
- Galindo, Renata. *My New Mom and Me*. Toronto: Schwartz & Wade, 2016.
- Gliori, Debi. *Dragon's Extraordinary Egg*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.
- Heo, Yumi. *Ten Days and Nine Nights: An Adoption Story*. Toronto: Schwartz & Wade, 2009.
- Kobb, Hoda. *I've Loved You Since Forever*. New York: Harper Collins, 2018.
- McLaughlin, Lauren. *Wonderful You*. New York: Random House, 2017.
- Parr, Todd. *We Belong Together*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2007.
- Richmond, Marianne. *I Wished for You*. Minneapolis: Marianne Richmond Studios, 2008.
- Stoeke, Janet Morgan. *Waiting for May*. New York: Dutton, 2005.
- Tuner, Ann. *Through Moon and Stars and Night Skies*. New York: Harper & Row, 1990.
- Tupper Ling, Nancy. *The Story I'll Tell*. New York: Lee & Low, 2015.

Adoption Resources for Adults

- Compton, Rebecca. *Adoption Beyond Borders: How International Adoption Benefits Children*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Carlisle, Kevin. *In Search of a Family: A Story of an International Adoption*. Ocala: Atlantic Publishing Group, 2010.
- Hampshire, Jodie et.al. *Lionheart: The Real-Life Guide for Adoptive Families*. Big Love Family Projects, 2017.
- Pertman, Adam. *Adoption Nation: How the Adoption Revolution is Transforming Our Families and America*. Boston: Harvard Common Press, 2011.
- Purvis, Karyn B. *The Connected Child: Bring Hope and Healing to Your Adoptive Family*. New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2007.
- Hoyt-Oliver, Jane. *Parenting in Transracial Adoption: Real Questions and Real Answers*. Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2016.

Hague Accredited Adoption Organizations

- ACF Adoptions
<http://www.adoptionflorida.org/>
- Holt International Children's Services
<https://www.holtinternational.org/>
- Wasatch International Adoption
<https://wiaa.org/>

Common Core Standards K–2

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.1**

With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.3**

With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.4**

Ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.6**

With prompting and support, name the author and illustrator of a story and define the role of each in telling the story.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.7**

With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear (e.g., what moment in a story an illustration depicts).

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.K.2**

Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.1**

Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.2**

Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.3**

Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.4**

Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.7**

Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.2**

Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.1**

Ask and answer such questions as *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, and *how* to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.3**

Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.5**

Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.7**

Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.