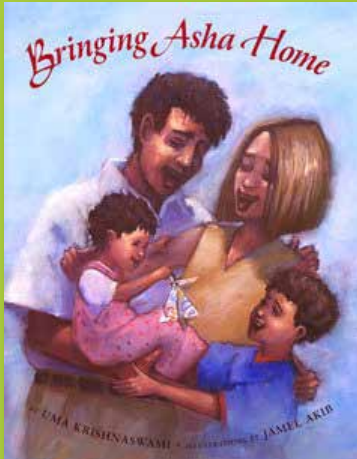


TEACHER'S GUIDE



LEE & LOW BOOKS

Bringing Asha Home

Written by Uma Krishnaswami

Illustrated by Jamel Akib

About the Book

Reading Level: Grade 3

Interest Level: Grades
K-4

Guided Reading Level: M

**Accelerated Reader®
Level/Points:** 3.0/0.5

Lexile™ Level: 560L

**Reading level based on the
Spache Readability Formula*

Themes: India, Family
Life, Siblings, Adoption,
Biracial Families,
Responsibility, Optimism
and Enthusiasm,
Immigration, Childhood
Experiences, South Asian
Interest, Realistic Fiction

SYNOPSIS

It's Rakhi, the Hindu holiday special to brothers and sisters, and Arun wishes he had a sister with whom to celebrate. Soon it looks as if his wish will come true. His parents are going to adopt a baby girl named Asha, and she is coming from India, where Arun's dad was born.

The family prepares for Asha's arrival, not knowing it will be almost a year until they receive governmental approval to bring Asha home. Arun is impatient and struggles to accept the long delay, but as time passes his love of paper airplanes and his supportive family help Arun conquer his frustration and find his own way to build a bond with his sister, who is still halfway around the world.

With warmth and honesty, this tender story taps into the feelings of longing, love, and joy that adoption brings to many families. Readers will find reassurance knowing there is more than one way to become part of a loving family.



BACKGROUND

(from Author’s Note) Rakhi is a north Indian holiday special to brothers and sisters. Rakhi, or Raksha Bandhan, is observed on the day of the full moon of the Hindu month Shraavan, which usually occurs in late August. On this day sisters tie colorful shiny bracelets, also called rakhi, around the wrists of their brothers. Brothers give small gifts to their sisters and promise not to forget the special bonds between them. If a girl gives a rakhi to a boy who is not a relative, it means she is adopting him as her brother.

Adoption connects children who need loving families with families who want children to love. It provides legally permanent parents for children whose biological parents are not able to care for them. In all adoptions, and especially in international adoptions, there are many governmental regulations and procedures that must be followed. As Arun finds out, dealing with the waiting period while the adoption is finalized can be difficult. In researching this story, I spoke to several parents who have adopted children from India. Everyone talked about the long wait. Then they told me how wonderful it felt when their child finally came home. —Uma Krishnaswami

Adoption in the United States: There are two types of adoption in the United States: domestic adoption and intercountry adoption. According to the US Department of State, adoption is different from guardianship under US law. (<http://travel.state.gov/content/adoptionsabroad/en/adoption-process/what-is-intercountry-adoption.html>) Adoption means there is a legal transfer of parental rights and responsibilities from a child’s birth parent(s) to new parent(s). The adoption process can be lengthy. In US Department of State booklet “Intercountry Adoption from A–Z,” (http://travel.state.gov/content/dam/aa/pdfs/Intercountry_Adoption_From_A_Z.pdf) the process (that Arun and his family would have undergone in *Bringing Asha Home*) looks like this: 1) selecting your adoption service

provider, 2) gaining approval to adopt, 3) being matched with a child, 4) adopting or obtaining legal custody of the child in the foreign country, 5) applying for a visa for the child to move to the United States, and 6) traveling home with your child. (http://travel.state.gov/content/dam/aa/pdfs/Intercountry_Adoption_From_A_Z.pdf) Currently, most adoptions to the United States come from (in alphabetical order) China, Colombia, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Kazakhstan, Liberia, Philippines, Russia, South Korea, Taiwan, Ukraine, and Vietnam. (http://travel.state.gov/content/dam/aa/pdfs/Intercountry_Adoption_From_A_Z.pdf) The Bureau of Consular Affairs offers country-specific information on adoption, including India, from where Arun’s family adopts Asha. (<http://travel.state.gov/content/adoptionsabroad/en/country-information/learn-about-a-country/india.html>) The University of Oregon’s Adoption History Project (<http://pages.uoregon.edu/adoption/index.html>) has a timeline (<http://pages.uoregon.edu/adoption/timeline.html>) about the history of adoption in the United States. Learn more about adoption in the United States from the Child Welfare Information Gateway, a service of the US Department of Health and Human Services. (<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/>)

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

Before introducing the book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

1. Take a look at the front and back covers. Take a picture walk. Ask students to make a prediction. Do you think this book will be fiction or nonfiction? What makes you think so? What clues do the author and illustrator give to help



you know whether this book will be fiction or nonfiction?

2. What does the word impatient mean? What does it mean for a person to be impatient? What does it mean for a person to be patient? When is patience helpful? Why is this an important skill to learn? Why might practicing patience be difficult for some people? Describe a time you felt impatient, when you were looking forward to something and couldn't wait for the time to come. What advice do you have for someone to practice being patient?
3. What does the word family mean to you? How might the word mean something different to different people? What does it mean to be adopted? What might be some challenges for a family with an adopted child or for a child who has been adopted? What might be some benefits for a family who adopts a child or for a child who is adopted?
4. What do you know about India? Where is it located? What languages do the people speak there?
5. Why do you think I chose this book for us to read today?

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1, Craft & Structure, Strand 5, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

Read and talk about the title of the book. Ask students what they think the title, *Bringing Asha Home*, means. Then ask them what they think this book will most likely be about and who the book might be about. What situations might be talked about in the text? What do you think might happen? What information do you think you might learn? What makes you think that?

Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, glossary, dedications, illustrations, and author's note.

VOCABULARY

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below. Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

CONTENT SPECIFIC

Rakhi Day, India, paperwork, referrals, permissions, bolts, mobile, baggage claim area

ACADEMIC

bracelets, exactly, certainly, adopt, faraway look, carefully, safely, tend, tuck, topples, over, clutching, tiptoe, crumpled, relieved, ceiling



Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out what adoption is, how the main character learns to cope with the adoption process and wait time, and to what the title, *Bringing Asha Home*, refers. Encourage students to consider why the author, Uma Krishnaswami, would want to share this story with young people.

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite evidence with their answers.**

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

1. Who is the narrator in the story?
2. What is Rakhi Day?
3. What does the name Asha mean?
4. What does it mean to adopt a child?
5. How does Arun feel about the waiting period before his sister arrives in the United States? How does Arun feel about her arrival?
6. What does Arun do to endure, or handle, the long waiting period?
7. What hopes does Arun have for Asha? Why does he want a little sister?
8. How many months pass between the time Arun finds out his family is adopting a little girl and the time of Asha's arrival?

9. How does Arun determine which of his paper airplanes to give Asha?
10. How many years apart in age are Arun and Asha?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

1. Why do you think the baby is given the name Asha?
2. Do you think Arun learns patience by the end of the story? Why or why not?
3. Why does Arun think Asha's best friend may be Denali? Do you think that is likely? Why or why not?
4. How would you describe Arun's relationship with his new baby sister?
5. Why does Arun's dad think Arun's idea about a baby swing seat is a good idea?
6. Why is it significant that Asha gives Arun a bracelet at the end of the story?
7. Why does Arun make paper airplanes? Why does he make Asha an airplane mobile for her crib? Why does he write colorful letters on the airplane he puts in his dad's suitcase to take to India with him?
8. What does it mean when Arun says he's as "jumpy as a frog?"
9. Why is Arun relieved to see that Asha is not crying when he first meets her? What is he worried about?
10. How do you know that almost a whole year passes in the story? What clues does the author, Uma Krishnaswami, give to show how much time has passed?
11. Compare Arun's family to his best friend Michael's family. How are the two families similar and different?



12. How do you think Asha feels about being adopted? How might she feel about coming to the United States and into a new family? What makes you think so?
13. What responsibilities do you think Arun will have now that he is an older brother?

Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1 and 2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion. You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. In a paragraph, describe what it means to be adopted. What might be some challenges for a family with an adopted child and for the child who is adopted? What might be some benefits for a family who adopts a child and for the child who is adopted?
2. What makes your family unique? What do you do to cope, or overcome your feelings, when one of your family members is away from home? Describe a gift you made for someone in your family and why it was special.
3. If you could celebrate Rakhi Day, who would you want to recognize as your honorary brother or sister? Describe a sibling, cousin, close friend, or someone else who is special to you. What do you enjoy doing with this person? How do you share and have fun together?
4. Do you think Arun will make a good older brother to Asha? What makes you think so? In a letter to Arun, give him advice on how he can be a good role model and older brother to Asha. What are his responsibilities as an older brother? What should he expect about having a sibling he may not have thought of yet?

ELL/ESL Teaching Strategies

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the book with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the text. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
 - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
 - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the book or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about what they admire about one of the characters, what the author's message in the book is, or what their relationship with a sibling or cousin is like.
5. The story contains some content-specific words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.



Awards and honors *Bringing Asha Home* has received include:

- Best Children’s Books of the Year, Bank Street College
- “Choices,” Cooperative Children’s Book Center (CCBC)
- Honor Book, Society of School Librarians International (SSLI)
- Paterson Prize for Books for Young People, Special Recognition

there? How many people live there? Who are some famous people from India?

2. Explore some of the reasons adults adopt children and share examples of famous people who experienced adoption in their lives. Beth Rowen at TeacherVision created a slideshow with examples. (<https://www.teachervision.com/persons/families/61487.html?detoured=1>) Discuss how adoption has evolved in the United States with this timeline (<http://pages.uoregon.edu/adoption/timeline.html>) from the University of Oregon’s Adoption History Project. (<http://pages.uoregon.edu/adoption/index.html>)
3. If any students in the class have been adopted or have an adopted family member and would be comfortable talking about their families, ask them to tell their classmates about their particular experiences.
4. Arun’s family adopts Asha from India. Have students research information about adoptions from India to the United States. What is the process like? The Bureau of Consular Affairs offers country-specific information on adoption, including India. (<http://travel.state.gov/content/adoptionsabroad/en/country-information/learn-about-a-country/india.html>) Then have students make a graph showing how many children were adopted from India to the United States over the past few years. Students may also compare this information to other intercountry adoptions. (<http://travel.state.gov/content/adoptionsabroad/en/country-information/learn-about-a-country.html>)

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Student who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

Social Studies

(Writing Standards, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9)

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strand 1)

1. Arun is biracial, and his family is adopting a child from India. Learn more about the country where Asha was born. Help students locate India on a world map or globe. On which continent is India located? What bodies of water border India? What countries border India? What is the capital of the country? What languages are spoken

Writing

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

1. There are three groups involved in the adoption: (<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adopt-ethics/>) Arun and his family who want to adopt Asha, Asha who is the child being adopted, and Asha’s family in India. Think about the family that is letting Arun’s family adopt



Asha. How do you think that family feels about letting Asha go to United States to live so far away? In a paragraph, describe some reasons why a family may need or want to permit a child to be adopted. What hopes or goals may a family have for adoption of its child?

2. Imagine that Arun accompanied his father on the trip to India to pick up Asha. Pretending you are Arun, create a postcard to send home to your mother with a picture on one side and a message on the other side. What do you want to tell her about India and seeing Asha for the first time?
3. Have students create a Venn diagram of Arun's family and their own families. Then, in two paragraphs, ask students to compare how Arun's family is similar to and different from their own families.
4. Ask students to predict what happens next in the story. Have them write what Asha and Arun's life and relationship will be like six months later. Write the scene from Arun's perspective to continue the point of view of the story.
5. Talk about Rakhi Day and its significance. (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/hinduism/holydays/raksha.shtml>) Have students create a narrative on the origins of Rakhi Day. Encourage them to imagine the first Rakhi Day. Why do sisters give bracelets to brothers? Who could have started this tradition? What inspired them?
6. Encourage students to think about the themes in the book and the future relationship between Arun and Asha. In a letter, students should try to persuade you about why you should use this book to celebrate or commemorate a specific holiday that they think best fits with one or more themes or topics in this book. For example, why would this book be great for National Adoption Month? (<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/nam/about/>

proclamations/) Ask students to think of a comparable holiday in the United States, if there is one. (<http://www.siblingsdayfoundation.org/about-us>)

English Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strand 3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Conventions of Standard English, Strand 1)

1. Bringing Asha Home has several adverbs ending in -ly (*safely, finally, carefully, exactly, only, mostly, and early*). Review or teach that an adverb describes a verb, adjective, another adverb, or a whole sentence (<http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/education/grammar/adverbs-ending-in-ly>) Discuss why adverbs are useful in writing. Why would an author choose to use adverbs? How do adverbs help provide more information to the reader? Ask students to make a list of other adverbs that end in -ly. Additionally, challenge students to write a story about their families using the seven adverbs ending in -ly found in *Bringing Asha Home*.
2. Read the book *Journey Home* to students. (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2416>)
3. This is another story about an international adoption. As students reflect on the story, ask them to compare how each family feels about and experiences adoption. What does each story reveal about the bonds of family?
4. *Bringing Asha Home* takes place over a time span of almost an entire year. Discuss with students how author Uma Krishnaswami shows time passing in the story. Discuss the purpose of transition words. Make a list of all the transition words she uses in the story. Support students in adding other transition words to the list. Check out the Reading Rockets mini-lesson on transition words (http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/transition_words) and their transitions list. (http://www.readingrockets.org/content/pdfs/transition_words.pdf) Then, ask



students to write about a recent holiday using transition words to show the passage of time.

Hands-on Activities & Art

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strand 1 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. Throughout the story, Arun makes many paper airplanes. Have students create and decorate their own paper airplanes. Have students test how far their airplanes can go on the playground. For construction instructions, try the basic airplane from the Exploratorium (<https://www.exploratorium.edu/exploring/paper/airplanes.html>) or ten other paper plane designs. (<http://www.kidspot.com.au/kids-activities-and-games/Activity-ideas+30/10-of-the-bestpaper-plane-designs+12392.htm>)
2. Have students draw a family portrait of their own families. Encourage students to share their pictures with the group and name the people shown.
3. Asha gives Arun a bracelet for Rakhi Day. Have students create their own bracelets to give to someone special in their lives. Teach students how to make the basic simple braided (<http://www.the-red-kitchen.com/2012/02/simple-braided-friendship-bracelet.html>) or knotted (<http://www.the-red-kitchen.com/2012/01/lots-of-knots-friendship-bracelet.html>) friendship bracelet using string.

Home–School Connection

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strand 2, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7 and 8)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. Ask students to research and select a recipe from India. Encourage students to try to make this recipe at home (with adult supervision) and bring it to class to share with classmates at a classroom food festival. Have students write down their recipes to include in a class recipe book. For easy snack ideas, start here. ([\[indianhealthyrecipes.com/kids-snacks-recipes-healthy-indian-kids-snack-recipes /\]\(http://indianhealthyrecipes.com/kids-snacks-recipes-healthy-indian-kids-snack-recipes/\)\)](http://</div><div data-bbox=)

2. In the story we learn Asha’s name means hope. Ask students to interview their parents, grandparents, or guardians about what their own name(s) mean and if there was a special reason why their names were chosen for them. Encourage students to write down any family story, personal connection, or history behind their own names. Students may ask their families and write about their first, middle, last names, or nicknames. If guardians don’t know the origins, meaning of, or story behind the child’s name, they can look online to learn about the name at sites such as Behind the Name, (<http://www.behindthename.com/>) Ancestry, (<http://www.ancestry.com/learn/facts>) or the Surname Database. (<http://www.surnamedb.com/>)
3. National Adoption Month (<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/nam/about/proclamations/>) is November and National Adoption Day (<http://www.nationaladoptionday.org/>) is November 21. Have students create a list of ways to celebrate adoption. What could schools and families do to recognize the diversity of families? Read what President Barack Obama has done to recognize adoption in the United States. (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/10/31/presidential-proclamation-national-adoption-month-2014>)



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Uma Krishnaswami is the author of many books for young readers. In addition to writing, she teaches writing in the low residency MFA program in Writing for Children and Young Adults, Vermont College of Fine Arts. The inspiration for *Bringing Asha Home* came from an event at which Krishnaswami met families who had adopted children from India. She currently lives in northwest New Mexico and travels regularly to India. Visit her online at <http://umakrishnaswami.org/>.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Jamel Akib is the illustrator of Krishnaswami's *Monsoon*, for which he won the Marion Vannett Ridgway Award for Illustration, and Lee & Low's *Twenty-two Cents*, a picture book biography of Nobel prize winner Muhammad Yunus. (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2851>) His award-winning work has also appeared in numerous museum and gallery shows in England, including several Best of British Illustration exhibitions. A full-time illustrator of English and Malaysian ancestry, Akib now lives with his family in Salisbury, England.

ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

LEE & LOW BOOKS is the largest children's book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, "about everyone, for everyone," is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at leeandlow.com.

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<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2367> (secure online ordering)

By Phone: 212-779-4400 ext. 25 | By Fax: 212-683-1894

By Mail: Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue, NY, NY 10016

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Interest Level: Grades K-4

Guided Reading Level: M

Accelerated Reader® Level/
Points: 3.0/0.5

Lexile™ Level: 560L

Themes: India, Family Life, Siblings, Adoption, Biracial Families, Responsibility, Optimism and Enthusiasm, Immigration, Childhood Experiences, South Asian Interest, Realistic Fiction

RESOURCES ON THE WEB:

Learn more about *Bringing Asha Home* at: <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2367>

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.