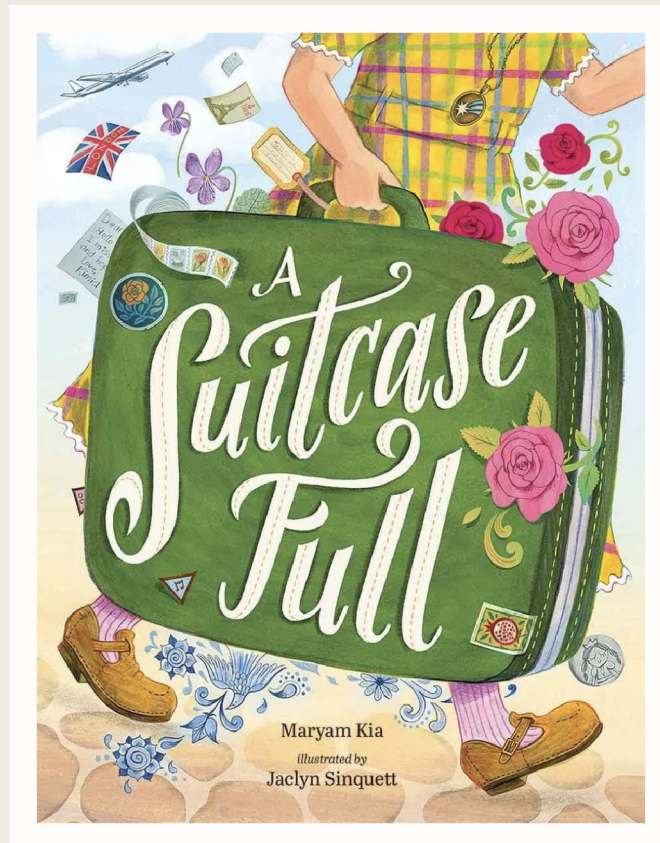


Teaching *A Suitcase Full*



by Maryam Kia · Illustrated by Jaclyn Siquett · Ages 5 - Adult

A Re-Imagining Migration Literature Guide

developed by Sara K. Ahmed, Re-Imagining Migration

Re-Imagining
MIGRATION

About the book

FROM THE PUBLISHER

A Suitcase Full is a picture book about the love of family, the power of one's story, and the beauty of embracing change while leaving and finding home. When a young girl's family is forced to flee Iran, there isn't time to make a plan. Kimia can only take one suitcase, leaving behind many cherished possessions and people, including her beloved grandmother, Nana-joon. Traveling halfway around the world, Kimia learns to weave her past into her present, celebrating both her roots and her growth.

Based on the author's childhood, the book invites readers to explore their own life stories and identities, and encourages shared storytelling and conversations about family history, migration, language, culture, and resilience.

About the Guide

This guide braids literacy instruction and the Re-Imagining Migration framework into a single, coherent journey: readers build core comprehension skills — inference, retelling, using evidence, synthesis, and oral collaborative discussion — while moving through the Learning Arc from Moving Stories to Understanding Migration to Turning to Action. It honors our vision that literacy work and identity work are inseparable, inviting each reader to locate their own “suitcase” of language, memory, and belonging alongside Kimia's. The result is a guide that builds skilled readers and a more empathetic, inclusive classroom community at the same time.

Connection to the Re-Imagining Migration Learning Arc & Disposition Framework

The Re-Imagining Migration framework was developed by Verónica Boix-Mansilla at Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education, during a multi-year collaboration with Carola Suárez-Orozco, Adam Strom, the Re-Imagining Migration team, and leading educators and scholars. It rests on two connected pillars: the Five Dispositions, which name the long-term habits of mind and heart we foster in students, and the Learning Arc, which sequences instruction—Moving Stories, Understanding Migration, and Turning to Action—to build those dispositions over time. The dispositions represent the destination; the Learning Arc provides the path.

Learning Goals: Mapping Dispositions to the Learning Arc

Re-Imagining Migration Disposition	Learning Arc Phase	Instructional Focus in A Suitcase Full
1. Understand Perspectives	Moving Stories	Valuing Kimia’s story; exploring personal “invisible suitcases” (family history, culture).
2. Inquire with Care & Nuance	Understanding Migration	Investigating the reasons families move and the emotional complexity of Kimia’s journey.
3. Communicate Across Difference	Understanding Migration	Empathic listening; sharing stories of language and identity across diverse experiences.
4. Recognize Power & Inequities	Understanding Migration	Analyzing choices and control; noticing what Kimia could and couldn’t change during her move.
5. Take Action for Belonging	Turning to Action	Building classroom actions to welcome newcomers; fostering empathy into advocacy.

Framework: Re-Imagining Migration, Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education (reimaginingmigration.org)

A Note to Educators

Educator Pre-Reading Reflection: We invite you to journal before reading *A Suitcase Full* with your community.

Before facilitating these conversations, consider: What are the ‘items’ in my own “suitcase” that I carry (dispositions, experience, bias, identities)? How does my own story shape the way I approach this text? How can I hold space for the diverse stories in my room today?

Educator Consideration: We ask that you be mindful of the identities within your own community. Our updated *Moving Stories* guide offers alternatives to directly asking about family migration histories, instead focusing on universal experiences of movement, change, and belonging that allow everyone to participate safely.

Setting the Stage: Provocations & Invitations

(to be modified in developmentally appropriate ways for your community)

Provocation Type	Learning Arc Phase	Disposition	Options for Setup & Discourse
Sound Provocation	Moving Stories	Understand Perspectives	A listening station with songs in diverse languages. Signs on the table: “What do you hear? What feelings or memories does this music bring up?”
Loose Parts Provocation	Moving Stories	Understand Perspectives	An open suitcase with items (photo, key, stone, map). Sign on the table: “What might you take in your suitcase? Why does this item represent your story?”

Provocations & Invitations, continued

Provocation Type	Learning Arc Phase	Disposition	Options for Setup & Discourse
An Invitation to Write	Moving Stories	Communicate Across Difference	Table with postcards/notecards and stamps. Invite readers to write in the language that feels most comfortable and authentic to them, honoring their home languages and multilingual identities. Signs on the table: Who would you write to? Is there a message or drawing you would like to share with someone in our community or your home community? What languages do you like to write in—can you try drawing or writing a message in that language?
An Invitation to Explore and Storytell	Moving Stories Understanding Migration	Understand Perspectives Inquire with Care & Nuance Communicate Across Difference	Have a set of desk-sized maps, or printouts of maps (world and national) on table that include the places named in the story. Signs on the table: What places do you notice on these maps? What stories can you tell using the maps? Is there a place on this map that's part of your family's story?

Before Reading

Engagement	Focus & Language	Strategic Learning Work
(Options for Whole Group, Small Group, or Pair & Share Work)		(Standards, Dispositions & Learning Targets)
Pair & Share	Describe a place that makes your heart feel warm & happy on the inside—maybe it is with people you know, or a place you love to play, read, or spend time. Say even more about the colors, the smells, the sounds, anything else when you see it in your mind.	Text-to-Self Connection, Activating Background Knowledge/Schema, Visualizing Oral Language and Collaborative Discussion
Whole Group	Take a guided tour of the book before reading (explore the front cover, back cover, and endpapers). Use a See, Think, Wonder routine to prompt readers to analyze the cover art, book jacket, and endpapers.	Inferring & Predicting Using Evidence to Support Thinking Determining Importance Word Choice Analyzing Text and Illustrations Oral Language and Collaborative Discussion
Whole Group, Small Group, Pair & Share	Read the respective Author's and Illustrator's Notes at the end of the book, as well as the About the Author and About the Illustrator sections on the book jacket. Discuss: What did we learn about their identities? What connections do we have? What is unique to their identities?	Identity work Text-to-World/Self Connection Synthesizing & Determining Importance Using evidence to support thinking Oral Language and Collaborative Discussion

Before Reading, continued

Engagement	Focus & Language	Strategic Learning Work
Whole Group, Small Group, Pair & Share	Use the Project Zero See, Think, Feel, Wonder thinking routine for 1-2 pre-planned illustrations before, during, or after	Understand Perspectives Recognize Power & Inequities Analyzing Different Artistic Mediums Oral Language and Collaborative Discussion Imagery

During & After Reading

Engagement	Focus & Language	Strategic Learning Work (Standards, Dispositions & Learning Targets)
Small Group, Pair & Share	Kimia first packs everything she can in Nana-Joon's suitcase but then needs to make some hard choices. (Revisit the page if needed for recall) What would you pack in your suitcase? You might have a long list of items just like Kimia did at the beginning, but choose one thing, then turn and talk to a partner(s) and use this sentence frame: I would bring_____because_____.	Forming an opinion with reasoning to support Recall/Retell Character Analysis Oral Language and Collaborative Discussion Understand Perspective Self-Regulation & Decision Making

During & After Reading

Engagement	Focus & Language	Strategic Learning Work
Whole Group, Small Group, Pair & Share	What clues in the pictures and words tell us that Kimia feels like a newcomer to London, Paris, and O’ahu?	Inference Determining Importance Oral Language and Collaborative Discussion Analyzing diverse formats (pictures and words)
Whole Group, Small Group, Pair & Share	Let’s zoom in on the illustrations and notice some of the choices the illustrator makes in the pages of the book. Guide readers to see Nana-joon’s soft, blue rug early in the book, then look for elements of it later in the book—why do we think the illustrator added those colors and patterns on these pages too? Let’s use the text to help us. (From the Illustrator’s Note:) Kimia describes the rug as soft, and she thinks of it later in the story when she’s feeling nervous and homesick. The very thought of that soft blue rug brings her the strength to be brave.	Visual & Emotional Inference Symbolism Analyzing Text and Illustrations Author’s/illustrator’s craft & purpose Using Evidence to Support Thinking

During & After Reading, continued

Engagement	Focus & Language	Strategic Learning Work
Whole Group, Small Group, Pair & Share	What do you notice about how Kimia’s teacher treats her ability to speak more than one language? Is there a word from your family or home language that you love? What does it mean, and why is it special?	Using Evidence to Support Thinking Oral Language and Collaborative Discussion Recognize Power & Inequities Communicate Across Difference Understand Perspective
Journal Writing, Small Group, Pair & Share	What is the “suitcase” Kimia really carries by the end of the story — is it just objects, or something more?	Theme and Central Idea Figurative Language and Word Choice Oral Language and Collaborative Discussion Inquire with Nuance and Care Understand Perspectives
*Option: Whole Class Discussion or Small Group Table Discussions	Using guidance from above: Allow all readers to journal and partner with others to support idea and language generation before launching a whole group discussion. What is the “suitcase” Kimia really carries by the end of the story — is it just objects, or something more?	Theme and Central Idea Figurative Language Oral Language and Collaborative Discussion Communicate Across Difference Inquire with Nuance and Care Understand Perspectives

Post Discussion work

Engagement	Focus & Language	Strategic Learning Work
Post Discussion work:	We were just invited to read Kimia’s story, which the author Maryam says is a lot like her real life story. Think about your suitcase again, but this time, not with items you would pack. If you were to pack it with the pieces of your story—the family history, traditions, languages, and memories that make you who you are—what would be inside?	Theme and Central Idea Determine Importance Synthesis Metacognition Reflection Communicate Across Difference Take Action for Belonging Oral Language and Collaborative Discussion

Engagement Strategy: the invisible suitcase

Give the question a shape readers can hold. Draw a suitcase outline, fill it together as a community first, then let each reader fill their own—in words, in drawing, in any language they choose.

Invitations to Take Action for Belonging

Engagement	Focus & Language	Strategic Learning Work
(Options for Whole Group, Small Group, or Pair & Share Work)		(Standards, Dispositions & Learning Targets)
Journal Writing, Pair-Share, Small Group,	What is one new idea you have about moving, belonging, or language after reading this book? You can use the stem: “At First I thought_____now I think_____.”	Theme and Central Idea Determine Importance Synthesis Metacognition Reflection Take Action for Belonging Oral Language and Collaborative Discussion
Journal Writing, Pair-Share, Small Group	Make an action plan: What are some choices we have if we see someone sitting alone at lunch, on the playground, or during other times of the day? How might we share these ideas with our larger community? Let’s make an action plan.	Theme and Central Idea Determine Importance Synthesis Metacognition Reflection Take Action for Belonging Understand Perspective Oral Language and Collaborative Discussion

Invitations to Take Action, continued

Engagement	Focus & Language	Strategic Learning Work
Small Group or Pair & Share	What did Kimia’s teacher and classmates do that helped her share her story? Make an action plan: What is one thing our class could do this week to learn about each other’s stories and be welcoming to one another each day? Let’s make an action plan. We all have moving stories and sometimes people move during the school year. What is one thing our class could do to make a plan in case a new student joins us, or if a visitor comes to our class? Let’s make an action plan.	Take Action for Belonging Analysis Character Analysis Oral Language and Collaborative Discussion
Whole Class, Individual, or Writing in Pairs	Is there someone we should/you’d like to mail a postcard to that shares what you learned today about moving, belonging, or language? We can use our “At First I Thought, Now I Think” Statements to help us get started.	Determine Importance Synthesis Metacognition Reflection Take Action for Belonging Oral Language and Collaborative Discussion

Whole Community Art Project

Engagement	Focus & Language	Strategic Learning Work
Whole Community Art Project (Mural or Physical Artifacts)	Invite readers to create a multi-modal representation of your community “suitcase”—the memories, values, languages, and cultural traditions they carry with them. Readers may choose to write, draw, or assemble a collage displaying items that tell their personal and family stories, honoring their unique identities and sense of belonging, while highlighting that everyone is an important part of a community with many stories.	Take action for Belonging Communicate and build relationships across difference Understand perspectives Turning to Action Moving Stories Making text-to-self and text-to-text connections Visual inference Oral language and collaborative discussion

A Note to Educators

Educator Post-Reading Reflection: We invite you to journal after reading *A Suitcase Full* with your community.

- How did readers engage with Kimia’s story and express their own perspectives?
- What inclusive practices or community norms were most effective in making space for diverse student identities?
- What unexpected insights arose, and how might they shape what you do next or in the future?

Further Learning & Resources

To learn more about the frameworks and teaching approaches referenced in this guide, explore Re-Imagining Migration and Project Zero at Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Visit the Author’s Site: Maryam Kia <https://maryamkia.com/>

Visit the Illustrator’s Site: Jaclyn Siquett <https://www.jaclynsiquett.com/>

Re-Imagining Migration: reimaginingmigration.org



The Re-Imagining Migration Framework was developed by Verónica Boix-Mansilla at Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education (reimaginingmigration.org).