

Title	<i>I'm Here</i>				
Author (Text & Illustration)	Peter H. Reynolds				
Publication Year	2011	Publisher	Atheneum Books		
Translated Versions	Japanese translation available				
Words	200	Pages	32	YL Level	N/A
Synopsis					
<p>A lot of children are happily playing in an elementary school playground. The narrator says, "Can you hear it?" Since the narrator is unnamed and is only referred to as "I," the gender of the narrator is not specified. The illustration is also done in such a way that it could be either a girl or a boy. "I" is depicted sitting on the ground, apart from the circle of children who are happily playing.</p> <p>Using a sheet of paper that was carried along by the wind, "I" begins to fold a paper airplane. "I" imagines flying on a paper airplane and being carried into the starry sky. "I" shouts out loud, "I'm here!"</p> <p>Eventually, the paper airplane lands on the ground where all the children are playing and they catch it. "We've got you!" the children shout, and they send the airplane carrying "I" flying into the sky with all their might. When the paper lands gently on the ground again, a girl comes up to "I."</p> <p>The girl says, "I'm here."</p> <p>"I" replies, "Me, too. I'm here."</p>					
Introduction					
<p>We all have experienced that feeling of loneliness when starting a new school term or living in a new environment. It's certainly frustrating to not be able to join a circle of friends who look like they're having so much fun. <i>I'm Here</i> is a book that puts readers in the shoes of the sensitive and delicate protagonist. "I"'s narration is quiet, but rhythmical, like a poem or song. Words like "Boom. Boom," and "Up, up, up, up!" effectively indicate sounds and movement, and reading it aloud paints a more vivid picture of the world in this book. Reading onomatopoeic words aloud allows one to directly feel how hearing the actual words expresses something beyond their technical definitions. When I volunteered at my son's elementary school, I read this book to fifth graders in English and they seemed to be able to fully understand the story since I also supplemented it with Japanese. I encourage college students to choose their own background music to use while they read aloud. Finding the right music adds another dimension to the storytelling experience.</p> <p>While Reynolds's work may sometimes be a little preachy and excessively emotional, <i>I'm Here</i> is not like this, and is very skillfully written.</p>					

Related work/Reference URL
<p>[Other recommended picture books by Reynolds]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>The Dot</i> (Walker Books, 2003) (Japanese translation available) This is another story about drawing a picture. The protagonist is an elementary school student who has trouble drawing and her teacher tells her, "Just make a mark." When she draws a dot in the center of the paper, the teacher displays this drawing. Upon seeing this, the protagonist thinks to herself, "I can draw a better dot than that!" and subsequently draws more and more creative renderings of dots. This story reminds us that we are free to draw in any way we want.• <i>Ish</i> (Walker Books, 2004) (Japanese translation available) The young protagonist in this story loves to draw. After his brother laughs at his drawing, he he feels discouraged. One day, his sister casually utters a word that rekindles his desire to draw again. The word is "ish." This is a fun way to understand the "ish" suffix.• <i>Someday</i> (Little Simon, 2007) (Japanese translation available) This book describes a mother's perspective on her days of raising a daughter. She recounts her daughter's journey: from being a newborn baby, to learning how to ride a bicycle and to swim, going through puberty, and eventually becoming a mother.... Its short, poem-like sentences and simple imagery depict how life lessons are passed down from mother to daughter.
Notes
<p>A portion of this text is a substantially revised version of the draft frontispiece, "Seeking Inspirational Picture Books" [Ehon o Sagashini] [3] from <i>English Teachers' Magazine</i>, June 2019 (Vol. 68, No.3), Taishukan Publishing Co., Ltd.</p>

(Text: Motoko Fukaya)