A Parent's Handbook on International Adoption

An Honors Thesis (Honors 499)

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Abstract

International adoption is a challenging and rewarding process. As prospective parents begin the process, they should consider selecting an agency, preparing for home studies, budgeting, and exploring available financial assistance. Once the adoption has been processed, parents need to prepare for traveling to pick up their child and for helping the child adjust upon the return home. A crucial aspect of international adoption is incorporating your child’s birth heritage into your family. It is also important for parents to recognize that many different requirements exist from country to country. This project concludes with a list of resources that will assist parents in further exploring international adoption.
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Introduction

The goal of this handbook is to provide prospective adoptive parents with thorough and accessible information on some of the issues related to international adoption. Though it is by no means exhaustive, the last section of the handbook includes a list of resources parents can consult. It is my hope that parents will find this information user-friendly and that the writing is not so much academic in style, but more conversational. Of the few resources available on the topic of international adoption, many take an academic stance in examining and presenting information, leaving a gaping hole in adoption literature that is accessible to parents. This handbook is written to, in part, fill that hole.

Before starting the international adoption process, prospective adoptive parents will want to consider and discuss the following questions.

1. What are your ideas about race? What characteristics do you think people of different ethnicities have? Do you expect your child to have specific characteristics? As the child becomes Americanized picture him growing up into a child, a teenager, an adult, a parent.

2. How do you feel about getting lots of public attention, stares, questions, etc? If you have other children, might they feel left out?

3. As you become an interracial family, will you raise your child to have the same identity as you? How do you help her develop her own identity? Will her name reflect her birth country or your country?

4. How can you learn what it is like being nonwhite and growing up in a white society if you don’t know this from your own experience? Are you willing to explore this and to learn to be sensitive to your child’s world and experiences?

5. This decision makes your family interracial for life. How do you feel about other racial issues? Interracial marriage? How do you feel when people assume you are married to an Asian person (Black person, Latino person, etc.)

6. What is your motivation for this kind of adoption? Do you anticipate your child growing up appreciative that you “rescued” him from his birth country? Do you want to learn more about her birth culture? Can you respect it and appreciate it?

(Holt, 2005)
Section 1

The Adoption Process and Finances

Selecting an agency

It is possible to pursue international adoption independently, but as this method is risky and not reviewed favorably by most adoption literature, it is not further explored here. When choosing an agency, remember that you are essentially hiring their employees to provide a service. Pursue your search for an agency as such. There are three important considerations in choosing an agency:

- First, if you have a specific country in mind, does the agency work with that country.
- A second consideration is the agency’s history. It is important to look into the agency’s record regarding successful adoptions in general and specifically in your country of choice. Many agencies list the number of adoptions they complete on their website. It is also wise to seek referrals from those you know that have completed an international adoption. They can lend insight about agencies they have used and often know many other adoptive parents. Another source of information is adoption support groups, some of which can be found at the websites listed in section 5.
- A third consideration in choosing an agency is what services the agency provides. For most parents, an agency that provides pre-adoption, post-adoption, and in-country services is the best choice. However, cost may negate this option or parents may have other resources in their favor, such as knowing someone in the birth country who can help with travel or having a particularly extensive support network that reduces the need of post-adoption services.

Home Studies

Home studies bring about a variety of reactions from both perspective adoptive parents and those who have adopted and completed the home studies. Home studies have two purposes. The first is to be educational in nature. The family professional or agency staff person who
completes the home study will spend a great deal of time asking questions, prompting discussions, and dispersing information. The second purpose of the study is for the family professional or agency staff to see and understand the environment a child will be coming into. It is the second part of the study that seems to prompt anxiety and fear from perspective parents.

It is important to consider that the person conducting your study is a professional. He wants to ensure that adopting a child internationally is the best thing for you and for the child. Remember that you and that person are on the same team and both have the goal of providing a child with a safe, loving home. As far as the actual home visit, it varies on how detailed this visit gets. Some parents over prepare to the point of extreme cleaning and renovations only to have the person conducting the study barely look at the home. Other parents have experienced very detailed home studies. The key is to remember that they are not looking to place children in perfect homes; perfect homes do not exist. The family professional or agency staff is looking to see that the child will be coming into a safe, healthy home environment where the child has the potential to thrive. Perspective parents should also note that everyone living in the house will be interviewed during the home study, including children or elderly parents.

Paperwork

The extent of paperwork that prospective parents will file is beyond the scope of this project. This is an area in which parents will want to consult the agency they are working with. Requirements of who completes what paper work and the sequence in which it is completed vary greatly from agency to agency. It is strongly encouraged that parents make extra copies of all paper work they complete and keep it filed neatly.

Budgeting

Parents considering international adoption should create a budget to get a sense of the total cost of the adoption. Some adoption agencies aid with this, but the best option is to create a budget before approaching an agency and then have the agency aid you in refining it. Depending on your financial situation, it may take a couple of years for adoption to become a realistic consideration because of cost. For this reason, creating a budget should be one of the first tasks perspective parents take on. Costs vary greatly depending on country of choice and a number of other variables. The following is a list of budget items to consider; however, this list is not exhaustive.

- home study fees
- medical exams for the adopted child (in-country before adoption and once you return home)
- fees for acquiring all documents as well as copies, translation, verification, authentication, and notarization fees.
- immigrant and naturalization service fees
- postage, mail, and courier fees
- long distance calls
- agency fees
- foreign government fees
- travel expenses
Financial Assistance

Finances can be one of the greatest concerns of parents adopting internationally. Some financial assistance is available. The first place to begin is by checking with your adoption agency. Searching the internet can also provide the most up-to-date information, but be sure it is from a reliable source. New Beginnings Family and Child Services, Inc offers the following suggestions:

- Bank Loans- The National Adoption Foundation has low-interest loans and grants available to needy applicants. The loans are through Nations Bank and range from $2,500-$25,000. Call 800.448.7061 for more information.

- Foundations- A Child Waits Foundation also offers low-interest loans. Eligibility is based on financial needs. Call 413.499.3992 for more information.

- Tax Credit- As of 2002, the federal government allows for a tax credit of $10,160 for families with an adjusted gross income of under $150,000 a year. A reduced tax credit is available for families making over $150,000. International adoptions do qualify for this tax credit. For more information visit the IRS website at www.irs.gov.

- Employee benefits- some employers are now offering employee benefits that reimburse some of the costs of adoption or that pay for parental leave for adoptions. Check with your company’s HR department for possible benefits.

- Military non-recurring program- The military does offer a one-time subsidy for full-time military personnel that is up to $2000 per child or $5000 for siblings to cover adoption related expenses. Eligible personnel need to complete DD form 2673

- Creative methods- Many adoptive families get creative when it comes to finances. Some refinance homes or cars. Others hold various fund raising events. Often churches or other local community group are more than willing to help you with fundraising ideas and endeavors.
Section 2

Transitioning Home

Picking Up Your Child

Perhaps the most monumental, treasured, and nerve-racking event in the entire adoption process is bringing your adopted child home. One of the most important decisions that a parent must make at this point in the process is who will pick the child up and escort the child home. Depending on the birth country of the child, this decision may be made for you. Some countries require that both parents travel to the birth country to complete the adoption and travel home with the child. Other countries will allow one parent to pick up the child or allow for an escort to travel with the child and meet the parents in the U.S. While cost of travel and convenience may make an escort service or one parent traveling tempting, the overall best choice is for both parents to travel to the birth country.

The time in the birth country, the first few days with the child, and the time traveling home is all important potential bonding time. In many countries parents are allowed to spend time with the child in the birth country while the legal aspects of the adoption are being completed. This is valuable time to use exploring your child’s culture, bonding with your child, and beginning to help your child through the incredibly difficult time of transition involved with an international adoption. For older children, time with parents in the birth country gives them a chance to play the expert and to “show off” their birth culture. Parents should take advantage of this time to see important landmarks in the country, to visit locations where the child grew up or that hold other significance for the child, and to purchase gifts and other souvenirs from the birth culture to be used for decorating or to be given to the child as future gifts to mark important events. For younger children, the same events can be important, but it becomes even more crucial for parents to take pictures and journal or keep other records of activities and sights so the child can enjoy them in the future.

These first few days are also crucial for bonding because they give the parents the opportunity and responsibility of comforting the child and helping the child through the time of transition. Keeping in mind that a child is separated from primary caregivers; turned over to a new family; relocated to a new land with a new language and new smells, sounds, sights, and textures; and exposed to new forms of transportation all in a matter of days; it is easy to recognize that adoption can be a traumatic experience.
The case has been made that both parents should go to pick up the child from the birth country. This is true for a number of reasons. First, the parents serve as a crucial support for each other. It is much easier for parents to cope with the physically and emotionally daunting task of receiving and caring for a child in a foreign country if they have each other to lean on. Secondly, if only one parent travels to pick up the child it is likely that the child will develop an attachment to that parent, but may have a more difficult time with attachment to the other parent. Bonding with each parent is enhanced by the parent’s participation in the travel process.

There are several travel tips parents should keep in mind as they travel. The following list includes many from adoptivefamilies.com.

- Get in shape and stay in shape. Where as other parents have the chance to grow the necessary strength and endurance as the baby grows, you may jump right into carrying around a 15-20 lb baby.

- Be prepared before you get “the call.” Often travel plans are made quickly once the child is placed for adoption. Make a list of what to take with you including “baby” extras. Pack ahead if you can. Though you may be hesitant, it is a good idea to have the child’s room ready prior to bringing the child home.

- If you are staying in your child’s birth country for an extended period of time, make yourself at home as much as possible. Look into alternative housing arrangements as opposed to living out of a hotel room for several weeks. Look for clubs or service organizations that may be international, or for a local church where you can build some connections, especially if you have to make more than one trip.

- Research your destination and travel plan ahead of time, even to the point of knowing where to park at the airport. These little details can lessen the stress during the trip. Often during this trip parents are excited, anxious, and somewhat flustered, so the better the plans and the more flexible the attitude of the parents, the more enjoyable the trip will be.

- Be sure that you have passports for everyone who will be traveling. Passports can take 6-8 weeks to acquire, and you should be sure to apply for your passport as soon as you begin the adoption process. No one wants to get the call that their child is ready to be picked up and be stuck waiting on passports. Consult your adoption agency for details on acquiring a passport for your child as this process will vary depending on the birth country.

- Give your other children extra affection and appreciation. If other children travel with you, be intentional about paying attention to them. This can include special time and activities for the other children with one parent. Also help these children be involved. They can pick out outfits for the new sibling, help keep journals of the trip, and select souvenirs to take back to friends and family at home.
International Adoption

- If you are leaving a child or children at home, reassure them. These children may not understand all that is happening and it is important to take time to explain things. You may also want to consider creating a way they can count off the days you will be gone such as marking a calendar or tearing off a link in a paper chain with each link representing a day you will be gone. Reassure them that you will come home and that even though you are bringing home a new child, your will always be their mommy or daddy.

- When you are in the birth country, follow the “buy it when you see it” rule. Do not worry about trying to find the souvenir or item somewhere else for a better price. If you see something that you want for someone at home or for your child, buy it then. Also, plan ahead to get items home safely. Take an extra bag just for souvenirs. Consider taking a mailing tube to protect any artwork or other paper items that you purchase.

- Do not rely on your memory. So much will happen in such a short time that it will be extremely difficult to remember the details, even from day to day. Take pictures and video, more than you think you will want. Also journal about what you do and your feelings, whether this is on a computer, in a notebook, or using a hand held tape recorder. Make time for this a priority.

- Make time while you are in your child’s birth country to explore it. If your child is older, allow her to be the expert and show you around. Plan ahead so that you will have extra days in your trip for sightseeing.

- Learn a little bit of the language of your child’s birth country. You do not need to be fluent, but knowing some phrases will be beneficial. Basic conversation and terms for family members may be specifically useful.

- Consult your doctor before you leave about precautions you should take for your personal comfort. Similar information can be found at the Center for Disease Control website. There may also be a need for you to get certain vaccines depending on the country you are traveling to.

- Take along a sense of wonder. If you can be open and flexible and keep your composure throughout the trip, you will enjoy it much more.

Introducing Friends and Family

As a proud new parent it may be your first inclination to want to show your newest joy off to everyone! However, it is in your child’s best interest to take it slow. It is best to try to spend the majority of time in your home and with just your family for the first two weeks. After that, slowly introduce friends and family one at a time and just a few each week. Also, as much as others may want to help, it is crucial that the parents do the feeding, changing, and putting to bed of the child for the first few months. These are crucial bonding activities. For a child who may have had many caregivers at any one time in the past, it is important that the child learn who his parents are, and these activities help the child develop this understanding.
Bed Time

Bed times can hold considerable concerns for all parents and specifically for adoptive parents. The keys to successful bed times are to have a routine and to not make it a power struggle. It is important to remember that a child who has been adopted is adjusting to a whole new way of life. Bed time can cause anxiety in any child and this just adds to the stress of an adopted child. If the child wants to be comforted by you, it is wise to cuddle and comfort the child to the extent he is comfortable with. This can build the much needed bond between adoptive parents and their new child. Flexibility is necessary and this may require parents to spend a few nights in their child’s room to help the child become more comfortable with his surroundings. It is important to remember that most children who were institutionalized have never had a bed to themselves, let alone a whole room. When adopting more than one child, consider bed sharing if this is age and gender appropriate.

Even though parents will need to be flexible and go with the child’s needs, a routine is still important. It is routine that will help the child to adjust. This means that the same events should happen at approximately the same time each night and morning and involve the same people. Bed time routines can include stories, a bath, prayer time, singing low key songs, or just snuggling in bed. The same person putting the child to bed each night and waking the child up each morning will help the child build trust. It is not unusual for post-institutionalized children to have had the experience of expecting to be woken up by a familiar caregiver only to find that she never returns. Routine helps your child have a sense of security, predictability, and order in the world.

Meal Times

Meal times can be one of the most trying times after an adoption. Remember that your child may not be developmentally where you would expect him to be by age. Children who grew up in institutions were most likely exposed to harsh feeding times and may lack the skills needed to participate in family meal times or may avoid meals altogether depending on past memories. Parents need to be intentional about teaching children the basics of meal times from how to use a spoon to how to carry on conversations or ask for the food they want.

Introducing new foods can be challenging. The child may take a while to become accustomed to the new tastes, smells, and textures. New foods should be introduced one at a time. Parents should pay attention to what aspects of foods seem to cause the child “hang-ups”. For example, a child who may not like hard, crunchy carrots may be more willing to eat cooked, softer carrots. On the other hand, a child who is turned off by the more intensified taste of cooked carrots may be willing to eat fresh carrots, especially if he has the option of dipping them in ranch dressing.

School Considerations

When preparing to send your child to school, many concerns need to be addressed. First and foremost, the parent, with the help of school and healthcare professionals, should assess if the child has recovered sufficiently from the initial trauma and culture shock that come with international adoption. Though some may push for quick integration of the child, the child is not ready to be separated from parents and introduced to a new caregiver or authority figure until the child has adequately bonded to the parents. Children must first build up a sense of trust before they are ready to explore the world themselves. Though most children complete the
developmental task of forming basic trust by eighteen months, an adopted child may be delayed or have never successfully mastered this.

A second consideration is your child’s language development and academic abilities. Often children who are intelligent and academically able to achieve at the grade level their age would place them in are held back one to two years simply because of language difficulties. On the other hand, children who were institutionalized or otherwise not exposed to educational opportunities may be years behind other children their age. In either case, home schooling may be a valid option. This can offer the child the opportunity to learn at her own pace. Home schooling also has the added benefit of giving the child and parents another context in which to bond. For language development, it may be beneficial to hire a tutor or ask someone you know who speaks the child’s birth language to assist in this transition.

When the child is ready to begin school, parents should identify and utilize available resources. Schools may have after school programs or big brother/big sister programs that can add to your child’s successful transition into school. It is important to discuss any special needs your child may have with your child’s administrators and teachers. This often includes disclosing that your child has been adopted from another country. As the parent of an internationally adopted child you will, by necessity, become an advocate and educator for international adoption. One of the best way to help your child in school is to provide your child’s teacher with resources pertaining to international adoption. If you feel comfortable, you may also want to discuss with the teacher a plan for explaining adoption to your child’s class. Teachers have many demands placed on them and the more work you are able to do for them, the more willing they will be to work with you. The best time for explaining adoption to your child’s peers is kindergarten through second grade.
Section 3

Including Your Child's Birth Heritage

Considering Where You Live

Though this suggestion may seem extreme, it is important to consider where you live and how that may affect your child. There are many benefits to living in a community with other multi-ethnic families. This allows the adopted child to see that there are other families just like hers. Learning this truth by living it will have much deeper seated effects on the child than being told that there are other families like theirs. It is also important to consider how your child will be received in your community. Once your family becomes a multi-ethnicity family, you will be much more sensitive to discrimination and it is beneficial to consider this prior to bringing your child home. Parents have also found it important to consider the proximity of your home to the social resources you will need. Living near family, even if it means living in a community with little diversity, may be more beneficial because of the amount of support the family can provide. There is no right or wrong answer for where every family should live, but it is important to make this decision intentionally.

Finding a Balance

A fine balance exists between embracing your child's birth culture and forfeiting your own. It is very important that your child has a sense of their birth culture and an understanding of the heritage from which they come. However, it is just as important that your child learn and feel a part of your culture. Remember, you do not switch family cultures when you adopt a child, but rather become a multicultural family.

“People Who Look Like Me”

Parents can go to great lengths to teach their child about his birth culture, to celebrate holidays and read books that are catered to him. Still there is significance in your child seeing and interacting people who look like him. Before your child will understand the biological reasoning for why people look like they do, or make the connection between ethnicity and appearance, the child will identify that he looks different from his family. It is important for children to see and interact with other people who look like them. This can take some effort, but many sources suggest that adoptive parents seek out preschools and play groups that have children of a variety of ethnicities, and possibly even look specifically for a group populated with
children of an ethnicity that look similar to your child. Some parents have also found health care providers and other service providers from the same ethnicity as their child so the child is exposed to role models he can relate to at a young age. Seeing other people who look like your child can help boost self-esteem and a sense of belonging in the world.

Homeland Heritage Tours

Homeland heritage tours are often arranged by adoption agencies and are purposeful trips that take groups of adoptees back to their birth country. The tour may be a brief overview of the country with a great deal of general sight-seeing, or as specific as visiting the orphanage from which the child was adopted. These visits can include reuniting with extended family or foster families if locatable. The age in which children are ready to take these tours varies greatly. You as the parent will know when is best and right for you child. It is important to note that the child must want to go. Forcing a child who does not desire to revisit her birth country can cause conflict in your home and is much less likely to result in a meaningful experience for her. Parents should also be prepared that some older children prefer to go on these trips alone or with other adopted children. This trip can be an integral part of the child forming her own identity and she may feel that going on the trip alone is an important step becoming her own person.

Other Specific Ideas

There are a great number of ways to incorporate your child’s birth heritage. Local libraries, teachers, and the internet can be great sources of information. Celebrating birth country holidays and traditions are ways many adoptive families incorporate birth heritage. Another way to explore the birth culture is to eat foods from that country and dine in a way traditional to that country. For parents planning ahead, spending time in the country during the finalization of the adoption can create great memories that can provide future doorways to exploring the birth culture. Parents can also plan ahead and purchase items from the birth country to be given on birthdays or other special occasions.
Section 4

Country Specifics

It is important to remember that currently each country has its own set of specifications.

China

China opened for international adoption in 1992. The country has a specified set of rules and guidelines, but often wavers from these, especially in the case of special needs adoptions or the adoption of older children. China requires that parents be between the ages of 30-55 years old, 30-45 years for the adoption of an infant. China allows a limited number of single women to adopt each year, but prefers married couples. Single men are not permitted to adopt from China. China also specifies that there may be no more than four children in the home at the time of adoption. The process of adoption from China averages approximately nine to eleven months in length and costs $18,000-$20,000. China requires that at least one parent travel to pick up the child.

Russia

Russia runs its adoption program through private agencies. A list of approved U.S. agencies is available at the consulate website. Benefits of adoption from Russia include the country’s openness to adoption by single women and the allowance of the adoption of more than one child at a time. Adoptive parents must be at least sixteen years older than the child they are adopting. Adoption from Russia requires two trips to the country and usually runs eight to eleven months from the time the application is submitted. Estimated cost of adoption is $25,000-$30,000. Specific concerns of adopting children in Russia include the prevalence of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) which is usually detected prior to the adoption, and Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE) which is more likely to be detected after adoption of younger children. Another concern in adopting from Russia is that many children suffer post-institutionalization difficulties.

Guatemala

Guatemala is considered very adoptive parent friendly. There is no age restriction on who can adopt from Guatemala and adoption is open to couples and singles. The wait is approximately one year and the cost runs an estimated $25,000-$35,000. One trip to Guatemala is necessary; however, the required stay is only two to three days. Children from Guatemala are
often raised in foster care prior to adoption. Foster parents in Guatemala pride themselves on the care they give foster children and on the efforts they put into preparing the children for adoption.

**South Korea**

Korea has relatively stringent family requirements for adoptive families. Parents must be between the ages of 25-45 years. Adoption is open to couples only and the couple must have been married for at least three years. There can be no more than four children already in the home. The approximate cost for adoption from Korea is $18,000-$24,000 and takes between ten and sixteen months from the time the application is submitted. Parents adopting from Korea may elect to have an escort bring the child to the United States or one or both parents may travel to Korea.

**Ukraine**

The Ukraine posses some challenges to adoption, but is still one of the top five countries in the number of children sent to the United States. Parents seeking to adopt from the Ukraine need only be 18 years old and must be at least 15 years older than the child they are seeking to adopt. The earliest age at which a child can be approved for adoption is twelve months and a child must have been registered for adoption for one year before being eligible for placement. Both singles and couples can adopt from the Ukraine. One or two trips to the Ukraine may be required, and in the case of married couples, both are expected to travel. The adoption process can take anywhere from four to twelve months and the cost is approximately $20,000 to $30,000. FAS, FAE, and post-institutionalization concerns similar to those of Russia apply to adoptions from the Ukraine.
Section 5

Resources

Websites
* It is important to note that most adoption websites are run by adoption agencies; however, the sites can still provide useful information. Below are several sites and a bulleted list of some of what each site has to offer.

www.ftia.org (Families Thru International Adoption)
  • Country specific information for several countries
  • A very useful FAQ section, pertaining partially to FTIA specifically and partially to international adoption in general.
  • Recent news in international adoption programs

www.childrenshopeint.org (Children’s Hope International)
  • Links to country specific information
  • Stories of other families’ experiences
  • Other useful links

www.adopting.org
  • Advice on selecting an agency, filing with immigration offices, and health considerations of the adopted child
  • Special section of tips for singles
  • Information about other forms of adoption, as well as parenting and fertility assistance
  • Many resources for parents just beginning to explore their family-building options
Books for prospective parents


Written specifically to address the multicultural issues related to international adoption, this book gives a little background as to why assimilation was the practice of the past and useful thoughts on incorporating both birth culture and adoptive culture into a child's life.


Though this book is written about adoption in general, it is full of valuable advice for parents adopting internationally. It also includes a chapter specifically on international adoption that addresses briefly several topics involved with international adoption.


The publisher describes this book as being organized around 23 steps that guide parents through all aspects of international adoption. This book appears to be a good how-to guide with helpful checklists. It does appear to lack an explanation of child development and why certain choices benefit the child more than others. This may prove to be an excellent resource for parents who already have children and are now looking to add to their family through international adoption.


This book serves as an aid for adoptive parents to record the details of the adopted child's early life. The focus is on creating an accurate, detailed record told in a sensitive manner that empowers a child as he pieces together the earliest accounts of who he is. The book addresses parental concerns about telling difficult stories such as abandonment and how to handle situations where the adoptive parent has very little information to share.


Targeting a variety of audiences, this book addresses everyday situations that are faced by cross-cultural families. The book seems to take a pro-active approach to helping those in an adopted child's life understand the adoption and accept the adopted child as a legitimate, authentic part of your family.

This handbook views international adoption through the medical model and speaks specifically to medical conditions. The book covers effects of institutionalization among other topics that may be somewhat useful to parents, but it is more likely that this book would be helpful to the family’s pediatrician.

**Children’s Books**


This book, written for early elementary aged children addresses the difficult and often neglected topic of why parents place children for adoption. The book addresses both issues of why a parent would place a child for adoption and how the child might feel, all within the story of a mother bird and her choice to find a new family for her baby bird. Though the book may not make the topics perfectly clear, it is a good starting place for further conversations.


Addressing the concerns about “real parents” by listing examples how this mother cares for her daughter, this book illustrates that being a parent is more than giving birth. The story is written for preschool and kindergarten aged children and explores all the ways that the little girl’s mom takes care of her, asserting her “real mother” status.


This book is written as the story of an adopted girl named Celia and the answers her parents give her as she asks questions about her adoption. These questions include why she was placed for adoption and if her birth mother will come back and take her from her adoptive parents. The *School Library Journal* praises this as “one of the best titles about adoption available for young children.”


Written for ages 4-8, this book is narrated from the perspective of the youngest of two Korean girls adopted by Caucasian parents. The book addresses the concerns familiar to adoptive families and explores the concept that no two families are alike.


Author Mary Petertyl wrote this book to fill a void she found in children’s literature when she was pursuing an international adoption herself. The book is written for children ages 5-9 years old whose parents are pursuing international adoption and helps to explain to children the process of their parents leaving them for an extended period of time to travel to another country in order to bring home the newest member of their family. The book is written as a story about a little girl who plants seeds that she must nurture while her parents are away; she will know they are returning soon when she begins to see sprouts. The book offers parents ideas for helping a child they may be leaving at home to cope with the separation.
International Adoption

References


