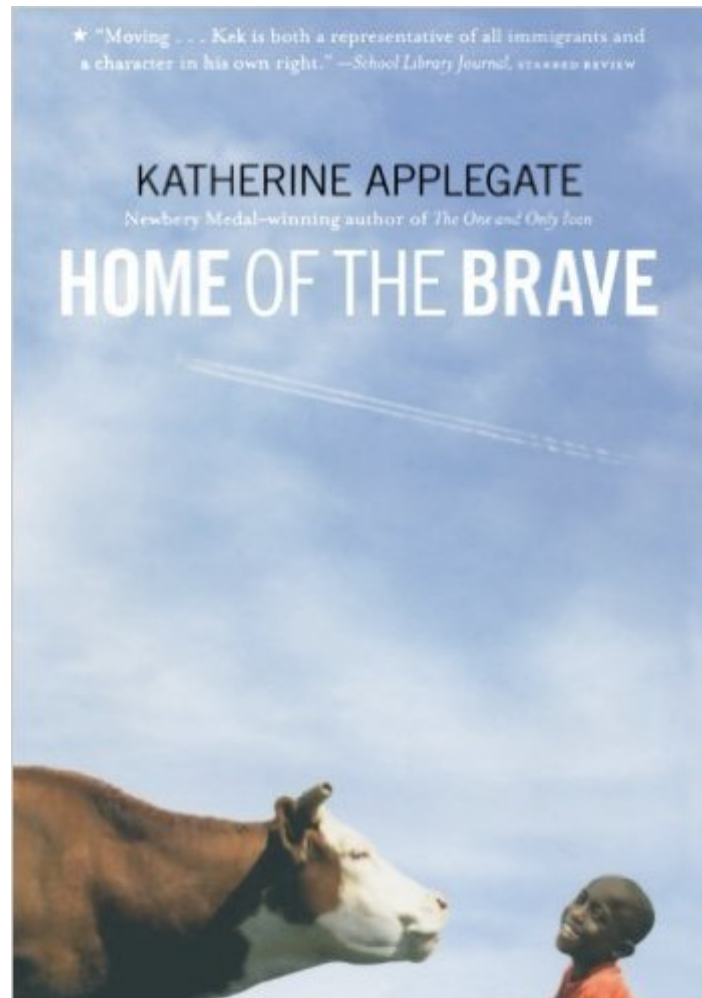


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Home Of The Brave



Synopsis

A man I helped to settle here taught me a saying from Africa. I'll bet you would like it: A cow is God with a wet nose. Kek comes from Africa where he lived with his mother, father, and brother. But only he and his mother have survived. Now she's missing, and Kek has been sent to a new home. In America, he sees snow for the first time, and feels its sting. He wonders if the people in this new place will be like the winter—cold and unkind. But slowly he makes friends: a girl in foster care, an old woman with a rundown farm, and a sweet, sad cow that reminds Kek of home. As he waits for word of his mother's fate, Kek weathers the tough Minnesota winter by finding warmth in his new friendships, strength in his memories, and belief in his new country.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars — See all reviews (66 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #2,348 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #2 in Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Africa #14 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Fiction #179 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life

Age Range: 10 - 14 years

Grade Level: 5 - 9

Customer Reviews

Having been an arrival to this country at age 12, I've always been interested in books that explore questions such as "What is home?" "What does it mean to be a stranger in a new land?" and "How does one begin to belong?" A novel written in free verse, *Home of the Brave* is a poignant story about an African war refugee from Sudan named Kek who arrives in the US in the thick of winter in--of all places--Minnesota. His father and brother have been killed, his mother is missing, and he has lost everything about his life that he has ever known. Welcome to America. From a dry, hot land where he was part of a nomadic herding tribe, Kek has arrived in a freezing cold country where he

must not only learn a new language, but also make friends and cultivate hope for his future. Usually the optimist, even Kek feels distraught upon his arrival at his new home. In the course of this tender tale, Kek makes friends--with a neighbor living in foster care, with an old woman who owns a rundown farm, and with an aging cow named Gol (which means "family" in his native language). His relationship with Gol is critical to his sense of belonging--and interestingly, it's one where language is not important. Through a combination of touching and humorous vignettes (my favorite being the time when he puts his aunt's dishes in the "washing machine," i.e. the laundry!), Applegate allows us to accompany Kek on his journey to find "home." And, isn't that something we all want to find? Once in a while a children's story comes along that carries you away with lyrical language, an authentic voice, and a story that allows you to make connections much larger than its plot. For me, *Home of the Brave* did all of the above.

Author Katherine Applegate's novel *HOME OF THE BRAVE* is memorable and haunting. In spare verse filled with detailed imagery, she introduces us to Kek, an African refugee struggling to come to terms with the loss of his immediate family and his new life in America. On his trip from the airport to the Minneapolis home of his aunt, he spots a tired old cow on a tiny farm. He names the cow, Gol, and she becomes both his link to the past and his hope for the future. Kek stays in the home of his aunt and his older cousin, Ganwar, who has lost a hand in the fighting in the Sudan. Kek makes new friends: young Hannah (a foster child), an older woman named Lou who owns the cow Gol, and his new ESL teacher, Ms. Hernandez. He refuses to stop hoping that his missing mother will be found, even though his immigration supervisors tell him she is most likely dead. There are so many things to love about this story. It's very readable and the action moves quickly, so even reluctant readers will find themselves caught in the story. We see America through the heart and mind of a young immigrant. Kek comes alive for us, and soon we are seeing the world through his eyes. He faces both small and large challenges, but he takes action by finding a job on Lou's farm and urging his older, embittered cousin to join him. He helps his friend Hannah reconnect with her lost mother, and ultimately finds a new home for the cow, Gol, when Lou decides to sell her farm. There are no wasted words in this story. Every page moves the story forward, and every word paints a vivid picture of Kek's world. By the end of the novel, I felt I'd gained a renewed respect for the idea of America as the "home of the brave." I recommend this story to readers at all levels.

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