

Call Me Gebyanesh

By Arlene Rosenfeld Schenker and Gebyanesh Addisu
Illustrated by Chiara Fedele

READING GUIDE

About the Book

Will I ever belong here? Gebyanesh asked herself on her first day in her new school in her new country. Her family had just moved to Jerusalem from Ethiopia, and already she was feeling unsettled by how different everything was.

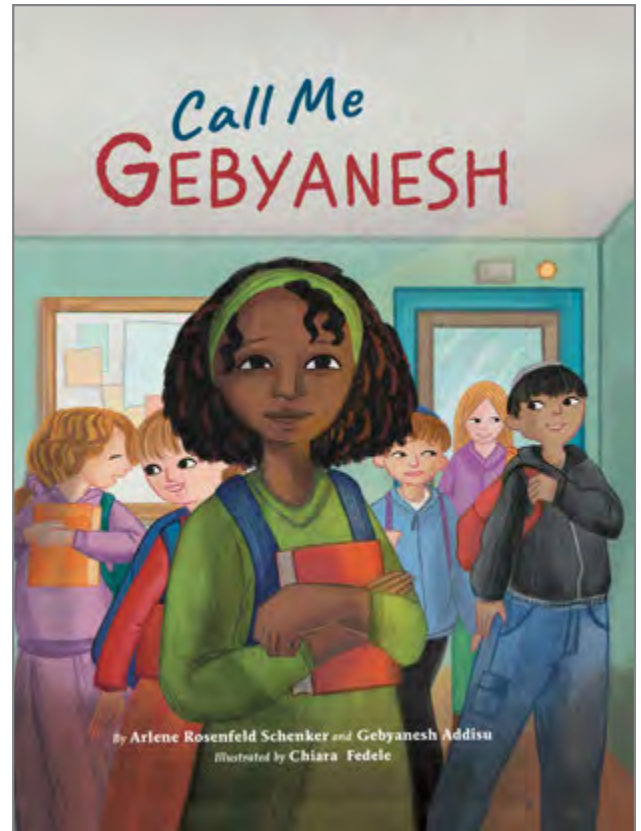
This was only made worse when her teacher could not pronounce her name—and wouldn't really even try. "We will call you Rakhel," the teacher said. That isn't my name, Gebyanesh thought. But she said nothing.

From then on, she was Rakhel at school and Gebyanesh at home. She didn't want to tell her parents about her struggles, but when they saw her Israeli name on some of her schoolwork, she couldn't hold back her frustrations any more. She would need their help to learn more about her heritage, her name, and how to stand up for herself.

Arlene Rosenfeld Schenker grew up in New York City. Following a short career as an attorney, she worked as a divorce mediator and then committed her time to mentoring children, volunteering, community activism, and raising her two children. A book reviewer for the Sydney Taylor Shmooze blog, she is thrilled to debut as a picture book author with *Call Me Gebyanesh*.

Gebyanesh Addisu immigrated with her family from Ethiopia to Israel when she was a child. *Call Me Gebyanesh*, her debut book, was based on her experiences in school. She graduated with honors from Hebrew University and is now completing her masters degree at Hebrew University in History.

Chiara Fedele was born in Milan, where she attended art school and received a degree in Illustration at La Scuola del Fumetto. She has worked as a freelance illustrator since 2004 for Italian and international publishers. She uses a combination of mixed traditional media and digital art.



Key Themes:

Cultural Pride, Anti-Bullying, Family and Friends as Support Systems, Identity

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Ages 4–8 years

Use these questions to preface and conclude a reading of this book with children. Encourage them to share their observations as you read the book together, and take time to linger on pages or spreads that generate more discussion.

Before Reading

- Ask your family if there is a story behind your first, middle or last name. Maybe you were named after someone, or your name comes from a different language or country?
- What makes you proud of your culture/religion/family history? What is a tradition or story that has meaning for you and why?
- Do you have a nickname? What is the story behind it?
- Has there ever been a nickname or a way of saying your own name that you didn't like? How did hearing people use it make you feel?
- Practice by saying Geb-YA-nesh until it feels easier to say. It shows a lot of respect when you work hard to say someone's name correctly when it might not be easy for you to pronounce or remember.

After Reading

- What do you think the look on Gebyanesh's face says about her on the cover when compared to the first page of the story?
- Have you ever felt left out or different from those around you? What did you do?
- If there was a new child in your class or neighborhood, what could you do to make them feel welcome?
- What are a few different ways you could politely decline trying a new food (but please try it if you are offered and feel comfortable!) if it doesn't smell good or it looks unappetizing to you?
- Do you have an adult you can talk to when something upsets you? If not, think of how you could ask someone to help you when you feel upset.
- Describe a time that you stood up for yourself and how it made you feel afterward. Did it help the situation?

Optional: Extension Activity

- Look for Jerusalem (Israel) and Ethiopia on a map. How far apart are they? Look at the map in the terrain or topography mode. What is different about the two countries?
- Read about the Ethiopian Jews immigrating to Israel. Some people walked from two weeks to a month across the Sudan desert. Imagine the strength and hope the Ethiopian Jews must have had to leave their homes and walk to where they could be taken the rest of the way to Israel. What are things you think you'd be willing to do for a better life for yourself and your family?





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Character Cut Outs

