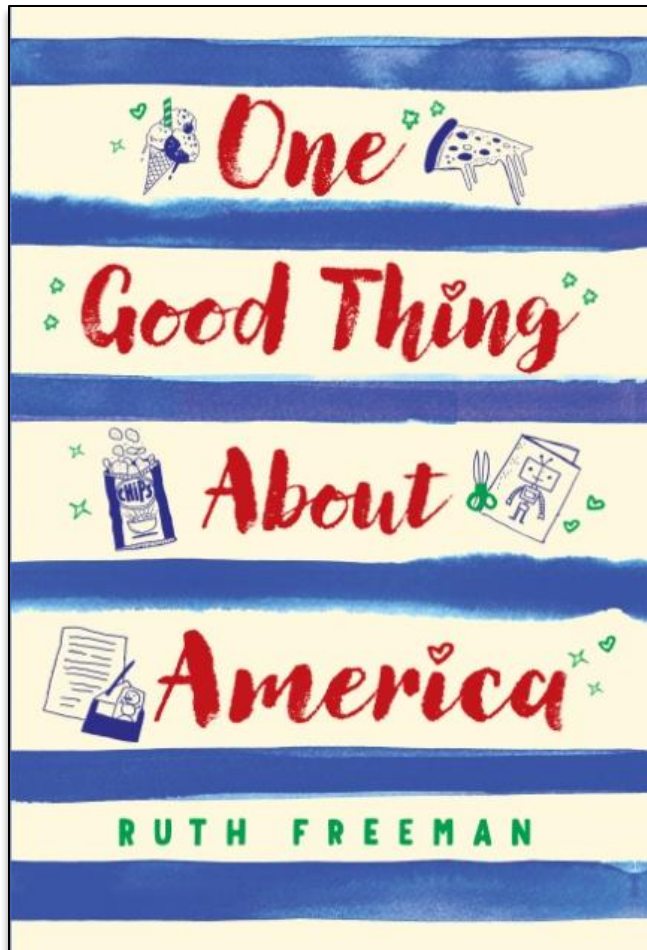


One Good Thing About America

Ruth Freeman



9780823436958 • Ages 8–12 • E-book available

"There is, of course, no way I can truly know the experiences of a refugee or an asylum-seeker. But I have tried to document what I have witnessed over the past five years and to bring alive the kind of story that so many students are living. And one day soon, my hope, and expectation, is that my students will write their own stories. I can't wait to read them."

- Ruth Freeman, author of *One Good Thing About America*

Guided Reading Level: S
Grade Level Equivalent: 4
Interest Level: Grades 3–7

Instructional Standards

Reading Literature: RL.4-5.1,2,3,4,5,6,9,10
Reading Foundation Skills: RF.4-5.4, 4a, 4c
Writing: W.4-5.1,2,3,4,6,7,8,9,9a,10
Speaking and Listening: SL.3-5.1,4,4c,4d,5
Language: L.4-5.1,2,3,4,5,6



ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What is immigration?
2. What are the different reasons people immigrate to the United States?
3. What kinds of problems do immigrants face when they come to a new home?
4. What is the difference between refugees and asylum seekers?
5. Who are refugees and asylum seekers, and how can we protect their human rights?

MAKING REAL WORLD CONNECTIONS: BEFORE READING

1. How do you treat people who are different from you?
2. How would you want others to treat you if you were to move to a new, strange place?
3. If you had new students from different cultures come to your class, how would you make them feel welcome?
4. Why is it important for a community to make people from different cultures feel comfortable?
5. Why do you think some people are not tolerant of people from other cultures?

THEME

1. Discuss the central themes of *One Good Thing About America*. Use examples from the book.
2. How does the author develop the themes of family, immigration, friendship, and assimilation (adapting and adjusting to a new culture)?
3. Do you think this is a good title for the book? Why is the title important to this story?

CHARACTERIZATION

1. Who is the main character? How do you know?
2. Describe Anaïs in depth. Support your answer by discussing her thoughts, fears, dreams, feelings, words, and actions.
3. Why do Anaïs and her family move away from Africa?
4. What are some good things about America for Anaïs?
5. How do supporting characters help Anaïs throughout the story? (Oma, Jean-Claude, Hassan, Mama, Ms. Taylor)
6. How does Anaïs change from the beginning to the end of the story (September to June)?

SETTING

1. What is the setting of the story?
2. Compare and contrast Anaïs's new home in the US with her home in Africa.
3. How does Anaïs face discrimination in the US throughout the story?

TONE

How does Ruth Freeman create humor in the story? Find examples from the book.



STYLE

1. Describe the overall structure of the book. How does the author's presentation of information contribute to meaning and style?
2. Choose a journal entry from the book. Rewrite it in a narrative form.
3. What is the point of view of the story? How does the point of view contribute to the authenticity of the story?
4. Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes, topics, and patterns of events in *One Good Thing About America* and another book from a different culture.
5. Analyze the impact of specific word choices on the meaning and tone of the story. Why do you think Ruth Freeman misspelled so many words?
6. How are you able to understand the story when some of the words are in French? Describe the strategies that you used.

AUTHOR'S PURPOSE

1. Why do you think Ruth Freeman wrote *One Good Thing About America*? What does she want to answer, explain, or describe?
2. Read the Author's Note. Write a letter to Ruth Freeman explaining how she accomplished her goal to give students a glimpse into what it is like for a brand-new student to arrive in an American school from another culture. Describe the parts of the story that made a lasting impression on you.
3. How is the theme relevant to what is happening in the world today?
4. What does the book teach you about the differences and common ground across cultures in general?

MAKING REAL WORLD CONNECTIONS: AFTER READING

1. How should you treat people who are different from you?
2. How would you want others to treat you if you were to move to a new, strange place?
3. If you had a new student from a different culture come to your class, how would you make that student feel welcome? How did characters in the book make Anaïs feel welcome?
4. Why is it important for a community to make people from different cultures feel comfortable?
5. Why do you think some people are not tolerant of people from other cultures? What would you say to someone if they were unkind to a new student in your class or neighborhood?
6. Did reading this book change you in any way? How did this book affect you personally?



PROJECTS

RESEARCH AND CREATE A POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

1. What is the U.S. policy for refugees and asylum seekers to enter a country?
2. Why do some countries not want refugees?
3. Are all refugees poor, and why?
4. What causes refugees to run away from a country?
5. How can refugees travel to another country?

GROUP PROJECT

1. Examine some personal stories of refugees and asylum seekers. Based on these stories, do you think the United States does a good job of protecting the human rights of refugees or asylees? What are we doing well? What could we be doing better?

Guide written by Marla Conn, reading/literacy specialist and educational consultant

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Ruth Freeman grew up in rural Pennsylvania but now lives in Maine where she teaches students who are English language learners, including many newly arrived immigrants. She is the author of several nonfiction picture books, and this is her first novel.

