



The New Girl

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Level 3



There is a new girl at Mira's bus-stop today.
Everyone stares at her. No one talks to her.

On the school bus, everybody sits with their
friends. The new girl sits alone.



At school, Salma Miss has a surprise for Mira and her classmates. "We have a new friend in our classroom!" It is the new girl!

Everyone stares at the new girl. "She looks different!" they say. Salma Miss says they must be kind and helpful to Zenie – that's the name of the new girl.



Mira remembers being the new girl once. Nobody spoke to her. Nobody played with her.

She smiles at Zenie. Zenie smiles back.

During art period, Mira shares her crayons with Zenie. At recess, they share their lunch. They sit together on the bus-ride home and even play in the evening. They are **BEST FRIENDS!**



Some children make fun of Zenie. They call her names that mean 'foreigner'.

"She is INDIAN!" Mira tells them angrily. But they simply laugh.

Zenie is upset. "It's okay to be different!" Mira tells her. Mira has often heard her mother say that to her brother who gets teased about his glasses.



One day, Salma Miss gives them a new project. Everyone is excited. Everyone, except Zenie.

"What should I do, Mira?" she asks. "Don't worry, Zenie! You can talk about your family, festivals, or your home." Mira tells her.

"But they will laugh at me, Mira!" she says. "When you speak, just look at the people who are nice to you," Mira tells her, remembering her mother's words.



When the big day arrives, there is plenty of excitement in the classroom. Salma Miss takes pictures of them in their costumes.

Zenie is not to be seen. She was not at the bus-stop either. Mira hopes she is not skipping school on this special day. Soon it is time to begin.



Parth is wearing a traditional angarakho-chorno from Gujarat. His twin sister, Puja is wearing a chaniya-choli. Together, they perform the garba.

Veena sings a beautiful freedom song in Tamil, her mother tongue.



Other children talk about festivals and traditions, food and famous people of India.

When it is Mira's turn, she proudly presents a slide-show about the princely state of Rajasthan, where she was born. Then, someone with tall headgear walks in.



It is... Zenie! They can hardly recognize her with her costume and make-up! Mira can tell that she is nervous.

"I come from Mizoram, one of India's twenty-nine states," Zenie begins. Everyone listens intently. They've never heard her speak much.

"My dress is called a puanchei. Now I will show you a Mizo dance called Chheihlam."



Salma Miss turns on the music. Zenie begins to move gracefully, enjoying herself. Some children giggle, but she ignores them. She is enjoying herself so much that nothing can stop her.

Soon Salma Miss joins Zenie. A few children dance along too. Others, like Mira, clap to the rhythm of the music. Everyone is having fun!



When the music stops, so does Zenie. There is a sudden silence in the classroom.

Salma Miss applauds. The entire class joins in.

On the bus-ride home, Zenie is very happy.

"You were right, Mira! It is okay to be different."
No one teases Zenie anymore. She is now 'one of them'!

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The New Girl

(English)

There's a new girl in Mira's class. Everyone calls her names because she looks 'different'. But does everyone have to be the same?

This is a Level 3 book for children who are ready to read on their own.



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