

Proposed Core Literature Titles

The following Summary is provided by the California Department of Education's "Recommended Literature List". And the top three Google searches of the book title and author name (e.g., title by author) that produced a description of the title.

Almost American Girl

Proposed Grade Level: 8



Title: Almost American Girl

Author: Ha, Robin

First Published: 2020

Proposed Grade Level: 8

Lexile Measurement: Unassigned

California Department of Education, Recommended Literature List:

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/rl/>

Following her mother's announcement that she's getting married, Robin is devastated. Overnight, she moves from South Korea to Huntsville Alabama. She is dropped into a new school where she doesn't understand the language and struggles to keep up. She is completely cut off from her friends in Seoul and has no access to her beloved comics. Robin's mother enrolls her in a local comic drawing class, which opens the window to a future Robin could never have imagined. A powerful teen graphic novel memoir about immigration, belonging, and how arts can save a life.

Descriptions From Top 3 Google Searches:

<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/robin-ha/almost-american-girl/>

Transitioning from life in Korea to America, a young woman struggles with change and figuring out where she fits. After her mother's decision to marry a man in Alabama, 14-year-old Chuna, who thought she was just going on another mother-daughter trip, grapples with culture shock, bullying, and integrating into a new family. Her mother is still her hero, and she recognizes the sacrifices she has made in order for them to survive. It's rough going though, especially when the rest of the Kims, her new stepfamily, are not very supportive. She can't help but compare Korea to the U.S., the lively streets of Seoul and her many friends to her isolation in 1990s Huntsville. Bullying, though for different reasons—in Korea, for coming from a single-parent home and in Alabama, for being Asian—is always prevalent in her life. (Many of the people she interacts with at school are White.) It isn't until her mother reminds her of her love of comics and drawing that

Chuna, now going by Robin, begins to thrive. Employing soft and subdued coloring for the majority of the work, Ha (*Cook Korean!*, 2016, etc.) uses sepia tones for recollections of her family's history in Korea. This heartfelt memoir from an author who shares her honest, personal experiences excels at showing how Ha navigated Asian American identity and the bonds between mother and daughter.

An insightful, moving coming-of-age tale. (glossary) (*Graphic memoir. 12-adult*)

<https://readingmiddlegrade.com/almost-american-girl-robin-ha-review/>

Almost American Girl is Robin Ha's graphic memoir detailing her move from South Korea to Huntsville, Alabama. Robin is 14 when she and her mother leave for one of their regular visits to the US. Except, this time it's not Hawaii or any other vacation hotspot — it's Alabama. Robin's mother has been encouraging her to learn English like she has been doing, but Robin is uninterested, preferring to enjoy her Korean comics and spending time with her friends, buying stationery and Korean street food.

When they arrive in Huntsville, Robin realizes that her mother is there to visit a man she has been corresponding with. His family welcomes them, but Robin feels out of place since she can neither speak nor understand English. She dreams of returning to Korea when the vacation is over. However, Robin is in for a shocker as her mom announces that she's marrying this man, and she and Robin are staying put in America. Her whole life changes forever, as she struggles to assimilate, while handling the ups and downs in her mother's relationship.

<https://www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/40030311>

A teen graphic novel memoir about a Korean-born, non-English-speaking girl who is abruptly transplanted from Seoul to Huntsville, Alabama, and struggles with extreme culture shock and isolation, until she discovers her passion for comic arts.

For as long as she can remember, it's been Robin and her mom against the world. Growing up in the 1990s as the only child of a single mother in Seoul, Korea, wasn't always easy, but it has bonded them fiercely together.

So when a vacation to visit friends in Huntsville, Alabama, unexpectedly becomes a permanent relocation—following her mother's announcement that she's getting married—Robin is devastated. Overnight, her life changes. She is dropped into a new school where she doesn't understand the language and struggles to keep up. She is completely cut off from her friends at home and has no access to her beloved comics. At home, she doesn't fit in with her new stepfamily. And worst of all, she is furious with the one person she is closest to—her mother.

Then one day Robin's mother enrolls her in a local comic drawing class, which opens the window to a future Robin could never have imagined.