Erika-San by Allen Say

Caldecott Medalist Allen Say creates a beautiful story about an American girl who seeks adventure in Japan and discovers more than she could have imagined.

In her grandmother’s house there is one Japanese print of a small house with lighted windows. Even as a small girl, Erika loved that picture.

It will pull her through childhood, across vast oceans and modern cities, then into towns—older, quieter places—she has only ever dreamed about.

But Erika cannot truly know what she will find there, among the rocky seacoasts, the rice paddies, the circle of mountains, and the class of children.

For Erika-san, can Japan be all that she has imagined?

My Personal Review:
Ever since that fateful day when Erika first saw her grandmother's framed print of a lovely Japanese cottage, Erika wanted to learn all about Japan. She loved hearing Japanese folktales at bedtime, she studied Japanese language from middle school through college, and she left for a teaching job in Tokyo immediately after her college graduation.

Unfortunately, Tokyo caught her by surprise with its enormity and complete lack of anything resembling that serene cottage from her grandmother's print. The employment agency had another job for her in a smaller city, but even there the hustle and bustle overwhelmed her. Only one other job
opening remained, on a remote Japanese island. Could this be the place where Erika might feel at home?

Acclaimed author and illustrator Allen Say has created yet another outstanding picture book that bridges East and West. Interwoven into the storyline are some important ideas in economics related to immigration and jobs. The subtle text and gorgeous watercolor pictures may even leave the reader with a surprising urge to travel far away and bicycle through lush, green rice paddies.

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