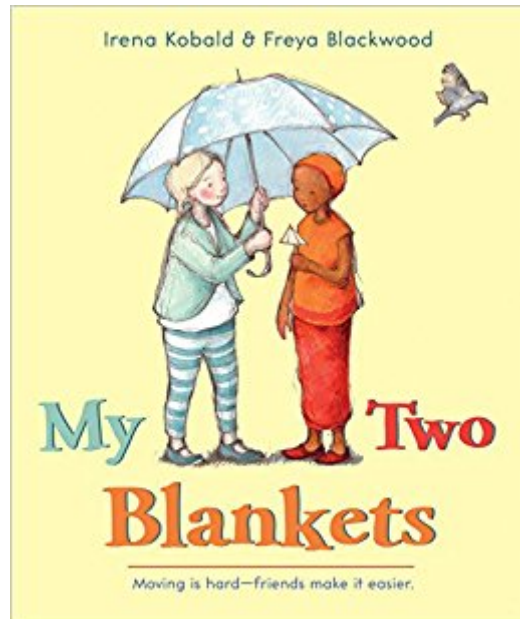




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# My Two Blankets



## Synopsis

Cartwheel moves to a new country with her auntie, and everything is strange: the animals, the plants—•even the wind. An old blanket gives Cartwheel comfort when she—•s sad—•and a new blanket just might change her world. This multicultural—• story of friendship is about leaving home, moving to a foreign and strange place, and finding a new friend. It's a story for all who have experienced change. Irena Kobald—•s poetic text, paired with Kate Greenaway medalist Freya Blackwood's powerful paintings, renders an emotional and heart-warming story about two children from diverse backgrounds coming together to become new friends.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: AD330L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 32 pages

Publisher: HMH Books for Young Readers (September 1, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0544432282

ISBN-13: 978-0544432284

Product Dimensions: 8.2 x 0.4 x 9.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 5 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #35,627 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #82 in—• Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Fiction #262 in—• Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World #395 in—• Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Emotions & Feelings

Age Range: 6 - 9 years

Grade Level: 1 - 4

## Customer Reviews

\* "Loneliness, cultural displacement, tentative friendship, and an explosion of sharing and kindness are accessible even to very young readers...An amazingly lovely import."—•Kirkus, starred review "With its bold visual metaphors, "My Two Blankets" ingeniously captures a child's efforts to weave the old with the new."—•New York Times Book Review "The blanket metaphor is powerful, and the way that sounds are depicted through shape and line works well."—•School Library Journal "The illustrations, a combination of watercolor and oils,

heighten the effect of the thought-provoking story. Just the right format for children to think about immigrants and friendship." – Booklist

Irena Kobald is multi-lingual Austrian immigrant to Australia, who teaches aboriginal children in Australian outback communities (the closest shop is 250 kms away!). The children she teaches use English as a fifth language (many speak several Aboriginal languages). Freya Blackwood grew up in New South Wales, Australia, and created several of her own illustrated books as a child. She is the illustrator of many acclaimed picture books published throughout the world, including *My Two Blankets*. After time in Sydney and New Zealand, she now lives in New South Wales with her daughter. [www.freyablackwood.com.au](http://www.freyablackwood.com.au)

I just finished reading this to my 4y/o grandchildren. It was little to old for them but we did talk about making friends with new people. I think it would be better for a child of 6 or 7 especially if they have immigrants in the neighborhood or to teach what people feel like when they go to a new place and do not speak the language.

I bought this book for my therapy office where I work with kids in pre-k and up, and it is perfect. Even for a child who is just moving to a new school, the story does a great job explaining the feelings kids go through, good and bad, in simple enough yet very descriptive terms. I could even see using the story with older kids to have them make their own "two blankets." 100% recommend!

*My Two Blankets* might be my favorite picture book of the year. In this heart-warming tale, Irena Kobald has taken the tried and true story of a new kid on the block and created a fresh and original multicultural story of Cartwheel who moves from Sudan to Australia. In addition, the combination of warm watercolors and oils provides an inviting atmosphere. An immigrant herself to Australia, author Irena Kobald is not a stranger to how lost and lonely one feels in a new land. In addition, being a teacher of aboriginal children in the Australian outback communities, most of whom use English as a fifth language, Kobald is also well-acquainted with how freakish one feels when surrounded by those speaking unfamiliar languages. No doubt drawing on those feelings, as well as being inspired by a friendship that developed between her daughter and a Sudanese girl, Kobald has written an endearing story that has been enriched by the use of a metaphor. When Cartwheel arrives in her strange new country, she finds security in a metaphorical blanket made up of her own words and the memories of her old world. Later, after a girl in a park smiles and waves at her, Cartwheel

weaves the new words given to her into a second blanket of origami shapes. This is the perfect format for turning a tried and true story into a fresh and original one that will encourage young and old alike to think about immigrants and friendship. Just as arresting is the artwork, which successfully depicts the essence of Cartwheel's emotions. Illustrations of Cartwheel and her blanket are always the colors of brown and orange and gold, as well as being in oil. The girl in the park and her origami words are always blue and green and pink and yellow, as well as being in watercolor. In addition, the illustrator Freya Blackwood notes that when Cartwheel explored her new home, the experience of no one speaking like her felt like a cold waterfall of strange sounds, and Blackwood originally intended this "waterfall" to be thick with symbols that represented words. However, in her drafts, she just showed this as a messy scrawl, and the scrawl seemed to work better than lots of symbols. Another reviewer also observed that the use of pigeons in the park and origami-shaped birds reminded her of freedom. As you can see, the artwork itself provides a rich experience too. Given that diversity is at the heart of this sweet tale, I initially felt taken back by the fact that the poetic text never directly states which country Cartwheel came from or moved to. The attire of both Cartwheel and her mom might suggest Africa as their homeland, as might the images in Cartwheel's metaphorical blanket.

We're also told that war came to Cartwheel's country. Beyond these clues, however, the only reason I know the story takes place in Sudan is that this country is specified in the reviews. As for where Cartwheel moved to, the buildings and mode of transportation suggest a city. No location is given, however, not even of a region or country. Critics aren't of any help here either. While I presumed Australia, given that this is where both author and illustrator live, the reality is we're never told. At first, I thought this omission a mistake, because I would have enjoyed the opportunity to learn more about these landscapes. Upon further reflection, I decided that the omission is genius. As a universal story of refugees and friendship, *My Two Blankets* is all the more accessible to everyone. Besides being a simply beautiful story, *My Two Blankets* also lends itself to educational opportunities. Teachers might talk about the use of metaphor. Furthermore, for those classrooms with the time, students could create their own metaphorical blankets of a time when they moved from one place to another. *My Two Blankets* is a delightful import from Australia that should find a treasured spot on your shelves.

"*My Two Blankets*" is a beautifully crafted story that uses precisely chosen, evocative language with drawings that blend with the text in perfect harmony. Irena Kobald conveys messages of hope,

friendship and acceptance through the eyes and actions of children. Her approach is devoid of saccharine sentimentality, a road she could have easily pursued. Instead, together with the artist, she delivers a heart-warming tale of how people can live together despite coming from the most diverse backgrounds: one of hardship, deprivation and want, the other a world of peace, abundance and prosperity. The metaphor of the blanket is original and impactful. This is the perfect picture book for your children.

When a young girl immigrates to a big city, the new language is especially difficult, flowing over her like a waterfall of strange sounds. She wraps herself in a blanket that brings back the sounds and words of home. This heartwarming story shows how she creates a new blanket as she makes a new friend at the park, weaving together new words and experiences.

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