

# INTRODUCTION

**HAVE** you ever felt like an outsider? Maybe you moved to a new school or a new neighbourhood or joined a new team or club or classroom?

In some ways, I have always felt like a bit of an outsider. Sometimes it feels like I don't quite belong because of the way I look or where I'm from.

If you've ever felt this way, this book is for you.

*Today I Am* is a collection of stories about kids who encounter moments of change, who want to feel more connected to someone or somewhere, who are struggling with or embracing what it means to truly belong.

There's a story about a family reunion and one about a boy who sprouts wings. There are stories set in imagined places, while others feel closer to home. Some involve magic or mystery. There's a story within a story, one told in verse and even one that's illustrated.

This book was written by some of my favourite writers — people who have also felt like outsiders at one point in their

lives and who have written beautiful stories inspired by the places they've lived or visited and by people they know.

The characters in *Today I Am* are learning to be themselves — kids who are discovering how to be wonderfully unique as they confront new people, places and truths. In each story, they learn something important about themselves, something that reminds them that they are smart, powerful, courageous, clever, compassionate, beautiful.

Today and every day, may you find the same courage to be entirely you — to say confidently “Today I am.”

Jael Richardson