

MITALI GOES TO AMERICA

by Emily, 11, MA



India. Now she is an adult and totally Americanized, with two sons and an American husband. She hopes that, through her books and her website, she can help other immigrants deal with the stress and the wonder of

molding into

used the fire escape off of her family's apartment as a sanctuary. "I used to go to the library every week", she explains, "and get seven books..that was our limit. I'd sneak out on the fire escape to read because the apartment was just full of people! It was there on the fire escape that I discovered how powerful stories can be, and how you could really escape and find meaning in your life. So, I call my website The Fire Escape because my hope is that other kids will discover that stories are a great way to make sense of things that are tough."

G9Girl Emily talks to Mitali Perkins, author of *The Not-So-Star-Spangled Life of Sunita Sen* and *Monsoon Summer*, on what's it like adjusting to a new country and having an open mind.

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to arrive in a new country where people speak a language that you and your family don't know? A country where the customs are totally different, where the people have a different skin color, and have different ideas of what is "beautiful"? That is exactly what happened to author Mitali Perkins as a young girl, coming with her parents and two older sisters to the United States from

MAKING FRIENDS

Mitali's family left India when she was just a toddler. Since they moved around a lot, Mitali always had to make new friends but, she says, the only ones she could rely on were her imaginary ones and her teddy bear. "I think that I needed to rely on a couple of things that were always the same, because everything else was always new, all the time." The name Mitali means "friendly" in Bengali, and she forced herself to grow into that name. "The more open you are to people, the more people will open up to you," she says.

THE FIRE ESCAPE

Mitali's website is called The Fire Escape because, as a new immigrant child in New York City, she

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