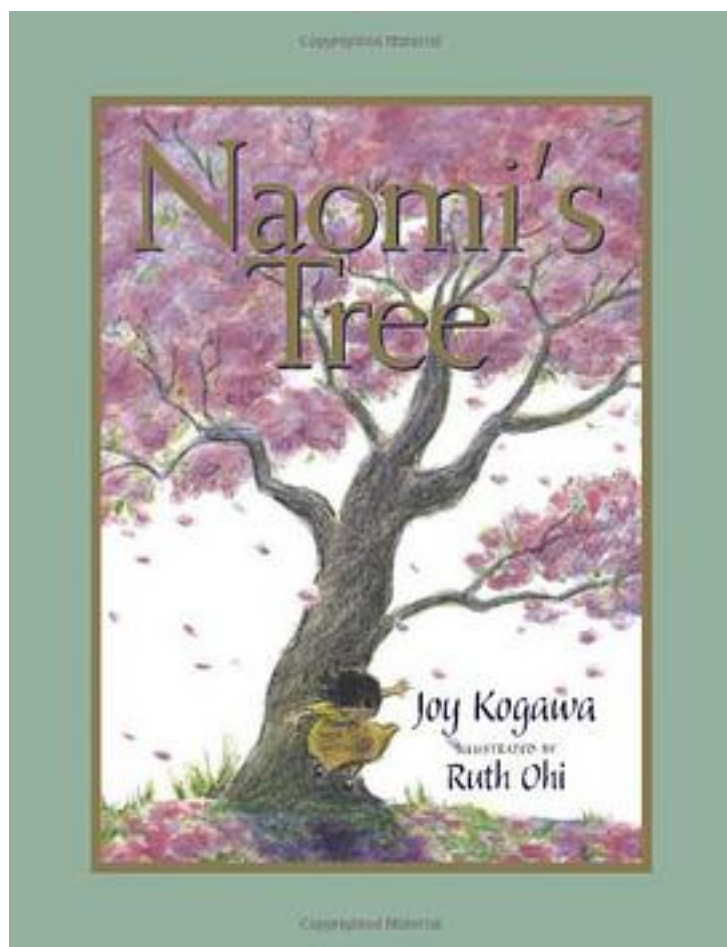


# Naomi's Tree



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Japan, known as the Land of Morning, a cherry tree grows and is cherished by the local people, who call it the Friendship Tree. A seed from the tree is eventually carried in the kimono sleeve of a bride, and she and her husband settle in a land across the sea called Canada. Here, the seed is planted in the couple's garden. Over the years, the cherry tree sees many changes, as the couple has children who grow up. And then the grandchildren, Naomi and Stephen, are born. As young Naomi grows, the cherry tree becomes her special friend. Its branches are perfect for climbing, and its leaves provide shelter for her tea parties and games. But one day, Naomi and Stephen's mother leaves their home in Canada to nurse their grandmother, who is ill in Japan. And while she is gone, the war breaks out and she is unable to return to Canada. When the family, along with other Japanese Canadian families, must leave their home to live in an internment camp far away from the coast. And though Naomi dreams of going home, the dream fades as the years go by and she never returns to the little house on the coast. And the little tree is left behind to mourn its loss. For many years the cherry tree sends out a song of love and peace that reaches Naomi only in her dreams. But the insects and small animals hear the song, and they send back their own messages to the tree, assuring it that Naomi is safe and that one day she will return. And one day, when Naomi and Stephen are very old, they do return to the coast and search out their former home. In the backyard, Naomi sees her old friend, twisted and scarred but still alive. And when she throws her arms around the old cherry tree, she hears the voices of the tree and her mother, sending their message of love and peace once more.

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