



INTERNATIONAL MIDDLE GRADE STANDING ORDER

What a wonderful mix of international middle grade fiction we have for you for our first standing order! Our featured book and author is ***Hello, Universe*** by Erin Entrada Kelly and it is this year's winner of the Newbery Medal. It is a delightful, inspiring and heart-warming book. In a starred review, *Publishers Weekly* says, 'Kelly offers up a charming novel about a serendipitous friendship that forms among a trio of sixth graders after a bully's heartless act brings them together . . . Infused with humour and hope, this book deftly conveys messages of resilience and self-acceptance through simple acts of everyday courage.'

The Best Medicine by Christine Hamill is also a charming, sweet book, surprisingly light given its subject matter. It's about a 12-year-old boy whose life is going well until his mother is diagnosed with breast cancer. *The Book Activist* says, 'The light-hearted touch in this story stops it from becoming a maudlin tale about illness . . . Instead, it is a down-to-earth, funny, emotive story which has you laughing and crying at the same time.'

Amal Unbound by Aisha Saeed is receiving rave reviews around the world. *Kirkus Reviews* (starred review) says, 'A Pakistani girl's dreams of an education dissolve when she is forced into indentured servitude . . . Amal narrates, her passion for learning, love for her family and despair at her circumstance evoked with sympathy and clarity, as is the setting. Inspired by Malala Yousafzai and countless unknown girls like her, Saeed's timely and stirring middle-grade debut is a celebration of resistance and justice.'

The Sky at Our Feet by Nadia Hashimi is another book that opens our eyes to the struggles of a different culture. When Jason, a young Afghan-American boy, believes his mother has been deported, he runs away, hoping to find his aunt who lives in New York. Along the way he meets a young girl called Max, who has her own reasons for running away. She joins Jason on his search, but the two friends know they can't run forever. 'The story is fast-paced and engaging with sympathetic protagonists who raise thought-provoking contemporary issues. An absorbing read.' (*School Library Journal*)

The Mystery of the Colour Thief by Ewa Jozefkiewicz is 'A really impressive nuanced debut looking at how to cope with and survive life' says *The Bookseller*. I loved this story of two young children, Izzy and Toby, both wounded in different ways, who find each other. When Toby shows Izzy a nest of cygnets that need rescuing, the baby birds become a way for the two friends to heal.

The Buried Crown by Ally Sherrick is a war-time adventure mystery. Set against the backdrop of the Second World War, a young boy called George must find a way to protect a magical crown that Hitler is desperate to possess.

Mike is the new novel from award-winning author Andrew Norris (*Jessica's Ghost*). It tells the story of Floyd, who is an up-and-coming tennis superstar in the under 18s circuit. Tennis is Floyd's life. But when a boy called Mike—who no-one else can see—starts turning up, Floyd is forced to reconsider everything he's ever known.

And finally in this selection is ***The Orphan Band of Springdale*** by Anne Nesbet. In (yet another!) starred review, *Publishers Weekly* says, 'In this uplifting, multifaceted historical novel set in 1941, Nesbet creates an arrestingly strong and sympathetic character in nearsighted 11-year-old Augusta "Gusta" Hoopes Neubronner . . . Nesbet deftly weaves disparate elements—music, orphans, labor unions, carrier pigeons, and a magic wish—into a richly developed story set during a pivotal era in American history.'

Happy reading.

Belinda

8558535



FEATURED BOOK AND AUTHOR : **HELLO, UNIVERSE** BY ERIN ENTRADA KELLY

Erin Entrada Kelly's latest novel, *Hello, Universe* received the 2018 John Newbery Medal. With their diverse characters and realistic situations, Erin's compelling novels aim to give hope to any reader who has ever felt like an outsider. Featuring Filipino-American middle-schoolers who feel like a misfit at school and at home, the protagonists change their lives and start thinking about themselves in a better way. Each one of them finds strength in friendship and support from a caring adult. For Virgil in *Hello, Universe*, his understanding grandmother makes life with an oblivious family tolerable. His classmate Valencia turns to a stray dog and her study of animals when she feels alone due to deafness. Erin was raised in Louisiana, but now lives in the Philadelphia area. Her mother was the first in her family to immigrate to the United States from the Philippines. Erin is a professor of children's literature in the graduate fiction and publishing programs at Rosemont College, where she earned her Master of Fine Arts in creative writing.

Find out more about Erin at: www.erinentradakelly.com

SPIRIT
SALLY CHRISTIE

**THE GIRL WHO THOUGHT HER
MOTHER WAS A MERMAID**
TANIA UNSWORTH

THE MAP-MAKERS' RACE
EIRLYS HUNTER

THE LAST CHANCE HOTEL
NICKI THORNTON

. . . And more to come. I'm still selecting titles for our October middle grade standing order. When the selection is finalised, I'll post it on our website.

COMING NEXT ISSUE

HELLO, UNIVERSE

ERIN ENTRADA KELLY

In one day, four lives weave together in unexpected ways.

Virgil Salinas is shy and kindhearted and feels out of place in his crazy-about-sports family.

Valencia Somerset, who is deaf, is smart, brave and secretly lonely, and she loves everything about nature.

Kaori Tanaka is a self-proclaimed psychic, whose little sister, Gen, is always following her around.

And Chet Bullens wishes the weird kids would just stop being so different so that he can concentrate on basketball.

They aren't friends, at least not until Chet pulls a prank that traps Virgil and his pet guinea pig at the bottom of a well. This disaster leads Kaori, Gen and Valencia on an epic quest to find the missing Virgil.

Sometimes four can do what one cannot. Through luck, smarts, bravery and a little help from the universe, a rescue is performed, a bully is put in his place, and friendship blooms.

Newbery Medallist Erin Entrada Kelly's *Hello, Universe* is a funny and poignant neighbourhood story about unexpected friendships. Told from four intertwining points of view—two boys and two girls—the novel celebrates bravery, being different and finding your inner *bayani* (hero).

SCIS: 1862733 | ISBN: 9780062877505 | RRP: \$14.99



STUDY NOTES

- What is Virgil like as a person? When he describes the rest of his family, he says he feels 'like unbuttered toast standing next to them' (p 4). What does he mean by that simile? How does he think he compares to his brothers? How does his experience in the well affect him?
- How does Lola's arrival help Virgil? What is she like, and what's her role in the family? Describe Lola's exchange with Valencia. What do Valencia and Kaori think of her?
- In more than one instance, Virgil wishes he could act as the 'Alternate Virgil' (p 39). How would he change himself if he could? How does the book's title relate to Virgil's hopes about changing? What changes does he actually make by the end of the book?
- Describe Valencia's personality and her interests. What is her nightmare and why can't she ask her mother for help? How do people, including her parents, treat her differently because she's deaf? Give specific examples.
- Valencia explains that she prays to Saint René. Who is he, and why does she pray to him? In the well, Virgil talks to Ruby San Salvador. Who is she, and how is she helpful to him? What does this tell you about Valencia and Virgil and how they are alike? What else do they have in common?
- Discuss Chet's character and how he treats other kids. Why do you think he's so unkind? What messages does he get from his father? How do you think those affect his actions?
- Kaori likes to tell people that 'her parents were born in the high, misty mountains of a samurai village' (p 26). What does this reveal about her character? Describe her interest in psychic matters and how that interest is important to the novel's plot. Talk about her relationship to Gen, how they interact, and how their personalities compare.
- Discuss the main characters' names and nicknames in the novel. Why does Valencia call herself Renee? Discuss Kaori's observation that Valencia seems proud of her real name, and the fact that 'Kaori was fond of her name as well' (p 265). What does Lola say about Valencia's name? How does Virgil feel about his name and nickname? How does Chet's last name lead to a nickname and relate to his character?
- Identify the different points of view that the author uses throughout the novel. How do the points of view differ by chapter? Why do you think the author chose to focus different chapters on different characters and use different points of view? How might the story have changed if it was told from Virgil's point of view only?
- The author uses similes and metaphors to create a vivid narrative. For example, Virgil's crying is compared to a faucet, starting on p 243 and picking up again on p 245. Discuss the effect of the metaphor and why the author extends it. On p 244, Virgil thinks of his family as speaking 'in exclamation points'. What images does that create in your mind? Find other figures of speech and discuss their impact on the reader.
- What's Your Sign? Kaori has a zodiac circle rug and asks for everyone's zodiac sign. Have students identify their own zodiac sign and learn more about it. What characteristics are associated with their signs? What's the relationship of their sign to a constellation? Have students informally interview friends and family to see who reads their horoscopes and if they believe in them. Hold a class discussion about their findings and why people do or don't believe in horoscopes.
- Snakes, Squirrels and Stray Dogs. Animals come up a lot in this novel. Valencia keeps a zoological diary, Virgil cares about guinea pigs, and Chet focuses on snakes in the woods. As a class, make a list of all the animals mentioned. Then, working in pairs, research one of the animals using print and digital sources. Create a multimedia presentation and share findings with the class.
- The Next Chapter. Virgil finally says hello to Valencia in his own way. When will they meet and talk in person? Individually, ask students to write the next chapter for the book about Virgil and Valencia's new friendship. Students should consider the point of view and narrative voice they want to use and should base the behaviour and dialogue of the characters on the rest of the book. Share the chapters in small groups.
- *Hello, Universe* received the 2018 John Newbery Medal. Research other books that have previously won the Newbery Medal. Select a book from the previous Newbery Medal winners to read and compare to *Hello, Universe*. Why do you think these books have won the Newbery Medal?

THE BEST MEDICINE

CHRISTINE HAMILL

Things aren't going well for Philip Wright. It's not just the detentions or the girl problems that are getting him down. Or the fact that he weighs about the same as a medium-sized dog even though he's practically a teenager. Now his best friend is acting super weird, his mum has stopped laughing at his jokes, and his English teacher thinks Philip is . . . a poet. When Mum gives him some seriously bad news, Philip looks to his comedy hero, Harry Hill, for an answer. But what if it's impossible to joke his way out of this?

SCIS: 1862705 | ISBN: 9781925584882 | RRP: \$16.99



STUDY NOTES

- How does Philip's relationship with his mother shift over the course of the book? How is this shown?
- Philip's mother is a single parent. How does this affect their situation? How does it make Philip feel?
- How does Susie fit in to Philip's family? How does Philip feel about her and how does that change?
- Philip feels that he is being bullied by 'the Yeti' and excluded by his friend Ang. Is he really? How do you think Eddie and Ang view these interactions?
- Why does Eddie behave the way he does? Do the reasons justify his actions?
- Do you think Philip waits until he has all the facts to make a decision, or does he jump to conclusions easily? How does this affect his actions?
- Can some of Philip's behaviour be thought of as bullying? Is he cruel, or just thoughtless?
- How do the circumstances of the book change Philip and Ang's friendship? How strong was it to begin with?
- Why do you think Philip hides his mum's cancer? Are his reasons understandable? How do you think his friends would react if he gave them a chance?
- Philip worries about having to say the word 'breast' and feels embarrassed about his mum's cancer. Why do you think this bothers Philip so much?
- Do you think Philip understands the reality of his mum's illness? Does he want to? Why or why not?
- How does having an ill person in the family change things for Philip? How do Philip and his mother cope with these changes? How do you cope in times of change and stress?
- Philip's hero is Harry Hill, a British comedian.

How does Philip's relationship with Harry Hill shape him? Who are your heroes and how do they shape you?

- One of the first things Philip notices going wrong with his mother is that she stops laughing at his jokes. What part does humour play in their relationship? Does this change with her illness?
- How does Philip use humour when it comes to his mother's diagnosis? Does he like to hide behind his jokes? Why? How does humour work as a tool to deflect serious emotions? Is this a bad thing?
- What does it mean for laughter to be the best medicine? Do you think this is true? Why? How do you think humour and comedy help those who are unwell?

MIKE

ANDREW NORRIS

For as long as Floyd can remember, his entire family's daily focus is on him being the youngest ever Under-18 UK tennis champion. And it looks like nothing is going to stop Floyd achieving his goal.

Nothing, that is, until a mysterious figure called Mike starts to appear at Floyd's matches. When it turns out that no-one else can actually see Mike, Floyd's life and plans for his future all start to slowly unravel. Suddenly, Floyd isn't sure of anything anymore.

SCIS: 1862436 | ISBN: 9781788450096 | RRP: \$22.99



STUDY NOTES

- After reading the first chapter, write a brief summary of what you know about Floyd, his life and his personality. As a class, share and discuss your summaries.
- In small groups, create a relationship map for Floyd. Place Floyd in a circle at the centre of the page and arrange the other characters and information about them in a circle around him. Draw lines between the different characters to signify their relationships and write a brief description about their relationships above each line.
- Hold a class debate with the contention being: 'It is wrong for parents to push their children into following in their parents' footsteps'.
- Hold a fundraiser to support research into mental health and awareness of mental health issues that commonly affect young people.
- Set up a support group for people struggling with the stress of daily life, school and extra-curricular activities.
- Floyd spends up to six hours a day, every day, training for tennis as well as going to school. As a class, create a survey about how much time students devote to extra-curricular activities and what those activities are. Include homework as well as recreational activities. In small groups, collect data from different classes and grades. Use your collected data to create a graphic display (bar or line graph) showing your results. As a class, discuss what your graphs show you about how students at your school spend their time after school and on weekends.
 - o What types of activities and how many activities do students do?
 - o How long do students spend doing organised activities or tasks outside of school hours?
 - o How much homework do students have to do?
 - o What are the most popular after-school activities?
- As a class, discuss the importance of sports psychologists and sports psychology for elite athletes. Do elite athletes have different needs than non-athletes? Why do you think this?
- Dr Pinner says that he thinks that Mike is a part of Floyd—or maybe Floyd is a part of Mike. Write a 500-word piece arguing for your interpretation of who Mike is in relation to Floyd and why. Include evidence from the text to support your opinion.
- When Floyd admits to Dr Pinner that he is not that interested in tennis, how does it make him feel?
- In small groups, discuss if and how you would assign *Mike* to a specific genre and why, then share your groups' conclusions with the class.

THE SKY AT OUR FEET

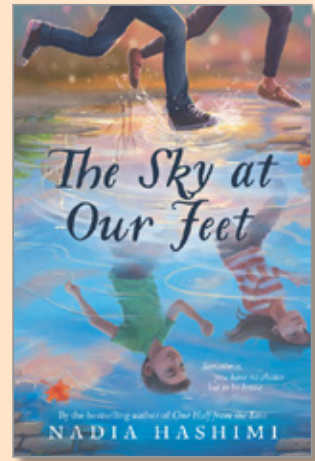
NADIA HASHIMI

Twelve-year-old Jason has just learned that, although he is an American citizen, his Afghan mother is not; she has been living illegally in the United States since his father was killed in Afghanistan.

When Jason sees his mother being taken away from her workplace by two official-looking men, he assumes that she is being sent back to Afghanistan, and he boards a train hoping to locate his Auntie Seema. But a concussion lands him in the hospital, where he finds an unlikely ally in a fellow patient: Max, a whip-smart girl who is hooked up to a slew of wires.

Both strangers to New York City, Jason and Max escape the hospital together into the skyscraper jungle and are soon navigating the subways, the annual marathon, and the Central Park Zoo while being pursued by frantic adults. But they both know that no matter how big New York City is, they won't be able to run forever.

SCIS: 1861154 | ISBN: 9780062421937 | RRP: \$24.99



STUDY NOTES

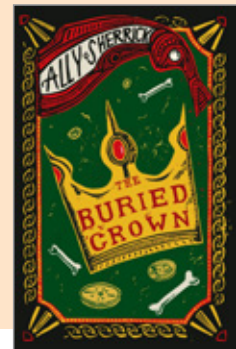
- The heroic protagonists exhibit a good balance between independent problem-solving and making mistakes. Discuss a time where you had to problem solve something that was important.
- Explore the similarities and differences in Max and Jason's lives. Find quotes from within the text to create individual character profiles for these main characters which address the following:
 - how they grew up
 - their relationships with their families
 - the ways they use their wits
 - their levels of trust.
- Most children with epilepsy lead full, active lives. Discuss epilepsy and what your role is when someone you know has a seizure.
- Nadia Hashimi wrote this book for various reasons; as a daughter of refugees she understood what it was like for them to struggle for identity while re-establishing themselves in a new country. Discuss with the students their understanding of refugees. Who is a refugee?
- Some asylum-seekers are not granted refugee status but can be granted the right to stay somewhere safe for a temporary amount of time. This status is often offered through a more local or regional agreement.
 - What do you think the benefits can be of having different types of protection for those fleeing dangerous situations and for countries accepting to host them from those dangers?
 - Is it better to have one type of protection or many?
 - Why?
- Some people are forced to leave their home environments because their natural environment is no longer habitable. We can view these people as forcibly displaced.
 - To what extent should international law and organisations provide shelter for them?
 - Should these people be classified as refugees?
- If a country is struggling to provide for its own citizens, should it take in refugees? What reasons are there for taking in or not taking in refugees?

THE BURIED CROWN

ALLY SHERRICK

It's World War II and Britain is on the brink of invasion. Londoner George has been sent to live in the countryside while his brother and guardian, Charlie, trains as a fighter pilot. But the war is closer than he thinks. An ancient burial ground nearby contains a priceless treasure, a magical Anglo-Saxon crown Hitler is desperate to possess. Alongside Kitty, the granddaughter of a Jewish archaeologist, George must find and protect the crown from the Nazi invaders before it's too late . . .

SCIS: 1862707 | ISBN: 9781910655320 | RRP: \$16.99



STUDY NOTES

- As a class, identify where the 'Beasts of Battle'—the eagle, the wolf and the raven—appear in *The Buried Crown*. Create a spidergram around each animal listing their qualities and characteristics. Do their roles change as the story progresses? If so, how?
- Discuss a famous item of 'treasure' you have seen—either in real life or on television/in a film. What sort of charm would you give it to protect it? What might the consequences be for anyone who tries to steal it?
- Individually, create your own piece of priceless treasure from recycled materials, inscribe it with a runic charm and then exhibit it in a class 'museum'.
- George is an evacuee from London, and Kitty a 'Kindertransport' refugee from Germany. As a class, explore the differences and similarities in meaning between the terms 'evacuee' and 'refugee'.
- Research the real-life stories of an evacuee or a refugee from World War II, or a so-called 'enemy alien'. Make a scrapbook-style collage of your chosen person's experiences based on your research. Then, putting yourself in their shoes, write two accompanying diary entries about:
 - the moment when you had to leave your home and family: who and what did you miss?; what did you have to leave behind?; were you frightened or excited—or both?
 - your arrival at your final destination: what do you see, hear, smell and taste?; what sort of welcome do people give you?; how do you feel—what are your hopes and fears about this new home?
- Working in pairs, research a real-life example of someone who performed a heroic deed during the war (eg soldier, sailor, nurse, an air-raid warden, an ordinary person 'doing their bit').
- Do you think George becomes more courageous as the story progresses? Why? If you don't agree, explain why not. What about Kitty, Raymond Scroggins, Spud and Hans Ritter?
- What's the bravest thing you've ever done? And—if you're prepared to confess it—the most cowardly? If you had your chance again, would you do things differently? Why or why not?
- George and Kitty have quite different views from each other about stories at the start of the book. What does George think by the end? What might have made him change his mind? Do you agree with Kitty's granddad that most stories have 'grains of truth' in them? Why or why not?

THE MYSTERY OF THE COLOUR THIEF

EWA JOZEFKOWICZ

After a frightening car accident, Izzy's mum is in a coma. Her family is in pieces. Her best friend at school has dumped her. And her nightmares are haunted by a shadowy man stealing all the colours from her world, leaving her feeling empty and hopeless. Then she meets her new neighbour, Toby, paralysed after a skateboarding accident, and together they find a nest of cygnets who need rescuing. Will Toby and the cygnets help Izzy solve the mystery of the colour thief and bring hope and happiness back to her life?

SCIS: 1862712 | ISBN: 9781788546492 | RRP: \$14.99



STUDY NOTES

- At the start of the novel, Izzy worries that she'll be 'bland and boring . . . and grey' on stage (p 63). By the end of the book, Izzy says 'I felt coloured in, in full technicolour' (p 174). What does she mean by that?
- Why does Izzy call the day of her Mum's accident 'the Blackest Day' (p 28)? What does the colour black represent here? If you have a bad day, which colour would you attribute to it, and why?
- Discuss the phrase 'colour thief'. What does this mean? Can a person really steal colour? Or is it metaphorical? What is a metaphor? Is time the colour thief?
- After reading, re-read the dream sequences (pp 1, 35, 71, 97, 131). What clues do they give about the colour thief?
- Write your own dream diary over a fortnight. Do your dreams give clues about your own life?
- What kind of person do you think Lou is? Write a letter from Lou to Izzy, explaining why the friendship isn't working.
- Later in the novel, Toby asks for help. Why is Izzy surprised? Why does it take so long for Toby to ask her for help directly?
- Izzy says 'sometimes I feel like I can't really do anything—I can't change anything' (pp 90–92). Have you ever felt frustrated about something and wondered how you could make a difference? Choose a cause you believe in and draw up a plan for how to effect change (eg you could write a letter, make a speech, even just start a conversation).
- Write a paragraph detailing a childhood memory. Then ask your parent or carer about that memory. Do they remember it differently? Think about how they saw that time from their point of

view. Has their memory distorted yours, or made you feel differently about it?

- Towards the end of the novel, Toby shows Izzy his 'Before Box' (p 136). Find an old shoe box and decorate it, stating the year, then fill it with things that remind you of the past year. Attach a small label to each one explaining your reason for it being there.
- Izzy's dad likes to make up words using a fusion of other words, such as 'specsational', which is a mixture of spectacular and sensational. Make up a list of ten new words from a combination of other words.

THE ORPHAN BAND OF SPRINGDALE

ANNE NESBET

It's 1941, and tensions are rising in the United States as World War II rages in Europe. Gusta's life, like the world around her, is about to change. Her father has had to flee the country, and Gusta has been sent to live in an orphanage run by her grandmother. Gusta arrives in Maine, lugging her one precious possession: a beloved old French horn, her sole memento of her father. But in a family that's long on troubles and short on money, how can a girl hang on to something so valuable and yet so useless when Gusta's mill-worker uncle needs surgery to fix his mangled hand. As Gusta gets to know the rambunctious orphans at the home, she feels like an outsider at her new school—and finds herself facing patriotism turned to prejudice, alien registration drives, and a family secret likely to turn the small town upside down.

SCIS: 1862722 | ISBN: 9780763688042 | RRP: \$24.99



STUDY NOTES

- In small groups, make a mind map of some of the characteristics of the historical fiction genre. Consider settings, characters, events and themes. In what ways does *The Orphan Band of Springdale* resemble a typical historical fiction novel? How is it different?
- Create character profiles for Gusta, Gramma Hoopes and Gusta's fellow students. Write a paragraph of information about each character, their traits and how they grow during the book. Include a picture based on your interpretation of the author's description of their appearance.
- Identify the orientation, complication and resolution of the story. As a class, discuss how these narrative features give meaning to stories.
- Keep a 'Vocab Journal' while reading the novel. Make a note of any words you come across that are unfamiliar and look up their meaning. Also keep track of any words or phrases that you particularly like and write a note next to each explaining why you like that word or phrase.
- Describe Gusta's connection to her French Horn. Why is it special to her? How does this connection drive the story forward?
- In small groups, explain how Gusta demonstrates the following character traits in the novel:
 - resilience
 - kindness
 - courage.
- The story deals with prejudice forming from residents of a small town against foreigners. How is prejudice represented in this book? How does the situation in this story mirror what is happening in the world today? Discuss the phrase 'history repeats itself'.
- What research do you think Anne Nesbet would have done when writing *The Orphan Band of Springdale*?
- Create a comic strip of a key scene from the novel.
- Write a book report on *The Orphan Band of Springdale* stating what you liked/disliked about the book, who you think would enjoy the book and mention any books that it is similar to. Use quotes from the book to illustrate your statements. Create a class blog or wiki to post your reviews and share them with other students.

AMAL UNBOUND

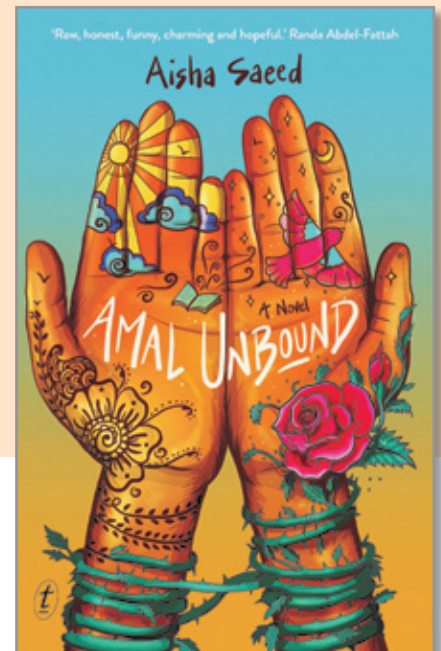
AISHA SAEED

Amal loves learning and aspires to be a teacher. She has her whole life planned out, including going to university and living with her best friend, Hafsa.

However, as the eldest daughter in her family she has responsibilities, and when her mother falls sick after the birth of her fifth daughter, Amal must take care of her young sisters and the house.

Amal rebels in an unlikely way and finds herself indebted to the son of her village's corrupt landlord. Forced into a life of servitude away from her family, Amal must use all her wits to survive. Still, her love of literature and learning cannot be quelled, and they lead her to discover a dark secret and the potential path to her freedom.

SCIS: 1862438 | ISBN: 9781925773026 | RRP: \$16.99



STUDY NOTES

BEFORE READING

- As a class, discuss the following questions:
 - Does the order of your birth have a role in shaping who you are? Are there certain responsibilities that come with birth order? If so, what do you think they are?
 - Are there any countries that you know of in which females are not given the same opportunities and rights as males? How does this compare to your experience here in Australia?
- As a class, find Pakistan on a map and discuss what students know about this country.

WHILE READING

- Plot a timeline of significant events in the novel. Underneath each event, write a description of the consequences of that event, and draw an arrow to any other event that happened as a direct consequence of it.
- In Chapter Seven, Amal wonders, 'Why did this random chance have to dictate so much of my destiny?' (p 34) List the moments of chance that Amal experiences which shape her destiny. Explain how these moments shape Amal's future.
- Describe all the ways that Amal acts as a teacher.

AFTER READING

CHARACTER

- With Amal in the middle, construct two 'maps' showing the characters in the novel. Have one map represent Amal's village and the other map represent the Khan estate.
- Like Amal, Nabila lives at the Khan estate as an indentured servant. How is her situation different from that of many of the other workers at the estate?
- Describe the relationship between Amal and Nasreen Baji. In what way is Amal's role as eldest daughter and her role as Nasreen Baji's personal maid similar or different?
- The mythology surrounding the Khan family introduces us to them as characters before they make an appearance in the text. What power do they have over the people in Amal's village, and even over the children who have never met them?

STYLE AND STRUCTURE

- This narrative is written in first person, from Amal's perspective. Imagine the novel was written from Amal's mother's point of view. What information could she give us that Amal couldn't?

- Foreshadowing is a literary device that Aisha Saeed uses in this story. What is foreshadowing? Can you identify when it is used in the text?

THEMES

BRAVERY, HOPE AND FEAR

- On p 38, the author 'personifies' hope when she writes, 'But hope was a tricky thing. It found its way back to me.' Did hope find its way back to Amal, or is Amal a hopeful person? Answer with reference to examples in the text.
- 'Making choices even when they scare you because you know it's the right thing to do—that's bravery.' (p 210) Do you agree with Asif's statement about bravery? Are bravery and courage the same thing? Write your own definitions of bravery and courage.

FRIENDSHIP AND FAMILY

- Do you think that Amal's parents had a choice in allowing Jawad Sahib to take Amal? Do you think they took responsibility as parents?
- Omar is one of Amal's best friends, but she complains that it is unfair for God to give her a friend who understands her completely and create him as a boy (p 11). Why does it matter that Omar is a boy?
- Compare and contrast the friendships Amal has with Hafsa and Nabila.

THE POWER OF EDUCATION

- Omar gets a scholarship at Ghalib, one of the best schools in the country. How could this change his life? What sort of life might he have had without this opportunity?
- Amal wants to be a teacher, but she feels she has lost her chance when she begins her life of indentured servitude. At the Khan estate, she begins to teach Fatima to read and write. What effect does this new knowledge have on Fatima's life? And how does it help Amal?
- People often say that 'knowledge is power'. What do you think this means? What does this say about the value of education?

RESPONDING

- Debate the following topic in class: 'If everyone decided nothing could change, nothing ever would' (p 207).
- Present a monologue from the point of view of Omar, Hafsa or Seema about the day Amal

- is collected and taken away. Consider the characters' feelings by reflecting on the events of the day, discussing their emotions, and questioning what the future will bring.
- On p 218, Amal asks the other servants, 'Isn't it a good thing that he's been caught?' Amal hasn't considered the implications for other people at the estate if the Khan family can no longer employ them. Write an extended response discussing whether you believe that Amal has done the right thing. Was her freedom worth more than the security of many other families?
- Amal Unbound* was inspired by the story of Malala Yousafzai. Research Malala Yousafzai and other inspirational women who have fought for women's rights and freedom. Select one of the women and create a multi-modal informative presentation detailing their life.
- In character as a United Nations Youth Delegate, write and present a persuasive speech, to be delivered at the United Nations, urging governments to take stronger action against indentured servitude.
- Write an essay that describes and analyses the many ways that the literacy centre in Amal's village serves as a symbol for freedom within the novel.