



Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Division

About the Book of the Month: This collection of featured books is from Books Matter: The Best Kid Lit on Bias, Diversity and Social Justice. The books teach about bias and prejudice, promote respect for diversity, encourage social action and reinforce themes addressed in education programs of [A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE® Institute](#), ADL's international anti-bias education and diversity training provider. For educators, adult family members and other caregivers of children, reading the books listed on this site with your children and incorporating them into instruction are excellent ways to talk about these important concepts at home and in the classroom.

Amina's Voice

Hena Khan (Author)

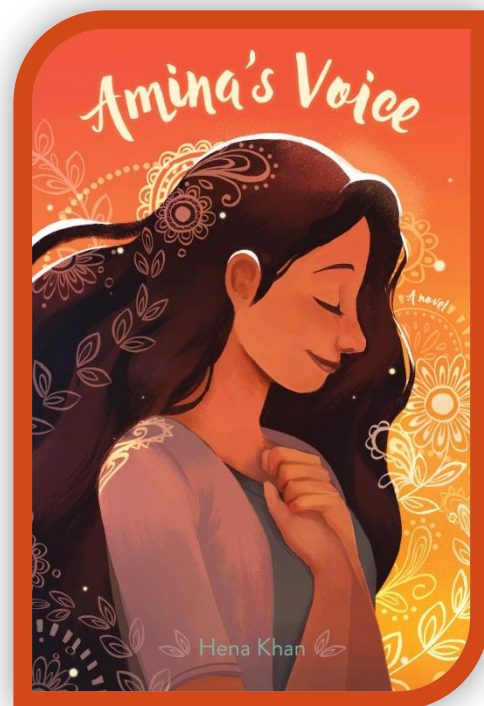
Amina has never been comfortable in the spotlight. She is happy just hanging out with her best friend, Soojin. Except now that she's in middle school everything feels different. Soojin is suddenly hanging out with Emily, one of the "cool" girls in the class, and even talking about changing her name to something more "American." Does Amina need to start changing too? Or hiding who she is to fit in? While Amina grapples with these questions, she is devastated when her local mosque is vandalized. This book illustrates the joys and challenges of a young Pakistani American and highlights the many ways in which one girl's voice can help bring a diverse community together.

ISBN: 978-1481492065

Publisher: Salaam Reads

Year Published: 2017

Age Range: 8–12



Book Themes

Muslim-Americans, Anti-Muslim Bigotry, Friendship, Community, Being an Ally, Culture, Names and Identity

Key Words

Discuss and define these words with children prior to reading the book. Do not focus on students' retention of all the words; instead make sure they understand the words enough to follow the story and

remind children of their meanings as they come up in the book. You can also post the words and point out to students when they appear in the story. See also ADL's [Definitions Related to Bias, Injustice and Bullying for Elementary Age Children](#).

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|---------------|----------------|------------------|---------------|
| ■ accent | ■ embarrassing | ■ interfaith | ■ serene |
| ■ arrogant | ■ exasperated | ■ Islamic Center | ■ subtle |
| ■ arson | ■ forbidden | ■ mosque | ■ traditional |
| ■ authority | ■ graffiti | ■ offense | ■ Urdu |
| ■ backbiting | ■ grudgingly | ■ orientation | ■ vandalism |
| ■ complexion | ■ guilt | ■ pioneer | ■ violating |
| ■ devastating | ■ imam | ■ <i>Quran</i> | |
| ■ disciplined | ■ impostor | ■ Ramadan | |

Discussion Questions

If the students read the book in small groups or as a whole class, ask discussion questions throughout their reading in order to check comprehension and engage them on a deeper level. Some of these questions can also be used as writing prompts. When students have finished the book, choose from these questions to guide a group discussion:

- What is the book about?
- What did you think about Amina when you are first introduced to her and how did your perception of her change throughout the book?
- Why is Soojin thinking about changing her name? What do you think about that?
- Have you ever considered a name change and why/why not?
- Why do you think Amina asks Soojin: "Don't you like being Soojin?"
- How do Soojin and Amina feel about people mispronouncing their names?
- When Baba and Mama talk about Mustafa "getting out of control like those American boys," what do you think they mean because Mustafa insists that he is American?
- How does the family's cultural background (Pakistani) impact how they feel about living in the United States?
- What conflicts do the children (Amina and Mustafa) encounter between living in the United States and their parents' cultural background and experience? Have you ever experienced something like that?
- What thoughts and feelings do the different members of their family (Amina, Mustafa, Mama and Baba) have about Thaya Jaan's visit from Pakistan?
- How does Amina feel about Emily being part of their pioneer project group?
- How does Amina feel about Soojin and Emily becoming friends? How do you know?

- What are some of the things Amina remembers about how Emily treated her and Soojin over the past few years?
- When Amina is at the Islamic Center, she thinks about another girl who wears a hijab (head scarf) and reflects that she can't imagine wearing it at school, because she'd be the only one. Why do you think she feels that way? Have you ever felt uncomfortable because you were the "only one?"
- How does Amina feel when she first hears about the Quran recitation competition? Why does she react that way?
- How does Amina feel about singing and music? How do you know?
- When Baba describes his brother, Thaya Jaan, as "traditional" and "everything to him is black and white," what does he mean? Does this ring true throughout your reading of the book or not?
- What did you learn about becoming a citizen through Soojin and her family's experience? Have you ever known anyone who was becoming a U.S. citizen?
- How do you think Thaya Jaan feels when he first arrives in the United States? How does the family feel about his visit?
- Why does Thaya Jaan think Mama and Baba should only speak to the children in Urdu?
- Why does Amina feel jealous of Emily and Soojin's relationship?
- When Amina overhears Baba talking with Thaya Jaan about her music, how does she feel? When she talks with her parents about it, what is their reaction?
- Why do you think Amina told Emily's secret to Bradley?
- How does Amina's mother help her figure out what to do to make amends with Emily and Soojin?
- What happened at the Islamic Center? How did Amina and others in her family feel? How did you feel when you read about it?
- What was it like when the family went to the Islamic Center and saw the damage? What did they say and how did they feel as they walked through?
- When Amina thinks to herself, "I'm afraid I will never feel normal again," what does she mean by that?
- What happens at the community meeting at Amina's school? How do people feel and what do they offer to do?
- Where did they hold the carnival and Quran competition? Why was that significant?
- What did Amina do in the end and how did she feel?
- How did you feel when the book ended?
- What is the overall theme and message(s) of the book?

Extension Activities

Below are activities that you can do with students in order to extend the learning from the book.

1. Acrostic Poems: People, Identity and Culture

Ask students: *What is identity?* Explain/elicite that one's **identity** consists of the qualities and beliefs that make a particular person or group different from others. Then ask students: *What is culture?* Explain that **culture** refers to the patterns of daily life that can be seen in language, arts, customs, family celebrations, food, religion, beliefs/values, music, clothing and more. Ask students: *What did you learn about Amina and her family's culture? What aspects of their culture are illustrated in the book (e.g. food, religion, customs, etc.)?* Have students consider aspects of their own identity and culture by writing down words, phrases, thoughts, feelings and pictures/symbols related to their identity and culture. These can include some or all of the following: name, nickname, meaning of their name; physical characteristics include skin complexion, hair, body size; race, ethnicity, heritage, nationality; family/family life and traditions; likes/dislikes, hobbies and interests; and their community/neighborhood.

Then have students write acrostic poems. Explain that acrostic poems use the first letter of each line to spell out a word or phrase, which can be a name, feeling, place or thing. Each of the lines in the poem needs to relate to the overall topic. Acrostic poems do not need to rhyme and each line can be as short or long as they like. For these acrostic poems, explain to students that they will use their names (first name or full name) to write poems about their identity and culture. They can also choose to do an acrostic poem about Amina, the protagonist of the book, based on what they know about her. After writing their poems, they can share them with the class by reading them aloud. If you need to provide an example, you can share the following:

Olive skin, brown eyes, short kinky hair
Likes our Christmas family traditions—tree trimming, cookies and church
Include my best friend and brother in most things
Veterinarian someday, that is my dream
Interracial Family makes me who I am
Animals are always on my mind

2. Reading Response Writing Activities

■ Write the next chapter of the book

Have students discuss what might happen next in the book and write an additional chapter. Remind students how the book ends and ask the following questions: *How do you think people react to Amina's singing at the carnival? How do you think Amina's friendship with Soojin and Emily develops? What happens when the community helps to rebuild the Islamic Center?* Have students write the next chapter of the book as they imagine it, beginning with Amina singing at the carnival or the next day in school.

■ Diary Entry of Character

Have students select a character from the book, which could include: Amina, Soojin, Emily, Amina's mother or father (Mama or Baba), Mustafa or Thaya Jaan. Then have them write diary/journal entries for the chosen character, writing 5–8 diary entries that the character might have kept before, during or after the book's events. Remind students that the character's thoughts and feelings are very important in a diary as well as their reaction to the day-to-day events and other activities that take place throughout the book. You may choose to have

students engage in pre-writing discussions with a partner about their character in order to get some of their ideas out. After they have completed the assignment, have them share their diary entries with the class and consider creating an online collection of all the diary entries.

■ **Book Review or Book Talk**

Have students write a book review of *Amina's Voice*. The elements of a book review should include: (1) title, author, genre and theme; (2) personal reflections about the book—how it made you feel, what you learned and your thoughts about it; (3) plot summary—describe what happened without giving away spoilers; (4) people/characters you loved or disliked; (5) a theme or message that resonated with you and why; and (6) why it is worth reading or not. Consider sharing the reviews on a class blog, using [GoodReads](#) for online reviews. In addition, students can do a “book talk” with the class in which they discuss the elements of their book review based on the categories above, or read it aloud and answer questions.

3. **Community and Being an Ally**

Talk with students about what happened after the Islamic Center was vandalized. Explain that after the Center was vandalized, the town held a community meeting in Amina's school cafeteria. At the meeting, different community members—including those who are members of the Islamic Center and those who are not—expressed their sad feelings about what happened and questioned why someone would do that. Police Officer Jenkins said: “Our best guess is that was a simple act of hate. Whoever did this was looking to send a message of fear, aimed at all Muslims.” Ask students: *How do you think people feel when they are the targets of hateful words and actions like the one in the book? How do you think other community members, who are not the targets but who live there, feel when others are targeted? How did the community members in the book show they were allies?* You may also want to share this recent incident that occurred in New York City, [Subway Riders Rise Up To Clean Swastikas From New York Train](#). Read the article aloud or distribute to students to read silently and then discuss it. Then, engage students in a discussion where they reflect on incidents of hate they have seen or heard about—either in their school, community or something they heard about on the news. Have students brainstorm possible community responses to those incidents and if time permits, take one of the ideas and implement it as a class project.

ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on identity, bullying, anti-Muslim bigotry and responding to hate and violence.

Curriculum Resources

“Anti-Muslim Bigotry and Being an Ally,” *Current Events Classroom*, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/anti-muslim-bigotry-and-being-an-ally.

“Identity-Based Bullying,” *Current Events Classroom*, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/identity-based-bullying.

“Responding to Hate and Violence,” *Curriculum Connections*, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/responding-to-hate-and-violence.

“Who Am I? Identity Poems,” *Current Events Classroom*, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/who-am-i-identity-poems.

Websites

Anti-Bias Education

www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education

Provides training program offerings for pre-K through 12th grade school communities—educators, administrators, youth and families—which focus on the development of an inclusive culture and respectful school climate by addressing issues of bias and bullying.

Be an Ally: Six Simple Ways

www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education

Some simple things a student can do to be an ally to targets of name-calling and bullying.

Creating an Anti-Bias Learning Environment

www.adl.org/education-outreach/curriculum-resources/c/creating-an-anti-bias-learning-environment.html

Provides tips for the classroom educator to create an anti-bias learning environment.

Empowering Young People in the Aftermath of Hate

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/empowering-young-people-in-the-aftermath-of-hate

A guide for educators and families that provide the tools they need to help young people confront hate effectively in the aftermath of hate violence or terrorism in their community.

Myths and Facts about Immigrants and Immigration

www.adl.org/education/resources/fact-sheets/myths-and-facts-about-immigrants-and-immigration

A list of common myths about immigrants and immigration and the facts.

Myths and Facts about Muslim People and Islam

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/empowering-young-people-in-the-aftermath-of-hate

This resource provides background knowledge about Muslim people and Islam, facts and information that dispel stereotypes and myths, terminology and suggestions on ways educators can address issues on immigrants and immigration in the classroom.

Children's Books

Below are links to lists of recommended anti-bias and multicultural books for the indicated category.

Religion & Religious Bigotry: Muslim/Muslim-American, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?subreligion=muslim-muslim-american&tid\[222\]=222&tid\[229\]=229](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?subreligion=muslim-muslim-american&tid[222]=222&tid[229]=229)

People, Identity & Culture, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid\[200\]=200&tid\[201\]=201&tid\[202\]=202&tid\[203\]=203&tid\[204\]=204&tid\[205\]=205&tid\[206\]=206&tid\[207\]=207&tid\[208\]=208&tid\[209\]=209&tid\[210\]=210&tid\[211\]=211&tid\[212\]=212&tid\[213\]=213&tid\[214\]=214&tid\[215\]=215](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid[200]=200&tid[201]=201&tid[202]=202&tid[203]=203&tid[204]=204&tid[205]=205&tid[206]=206&tid[207]=207&tid[208]=208&tid[209]=209&tid[210]=210&tid[211]=211&tid[212]=212&tid[213]=213&tid[214]=214&tid[215]=215)