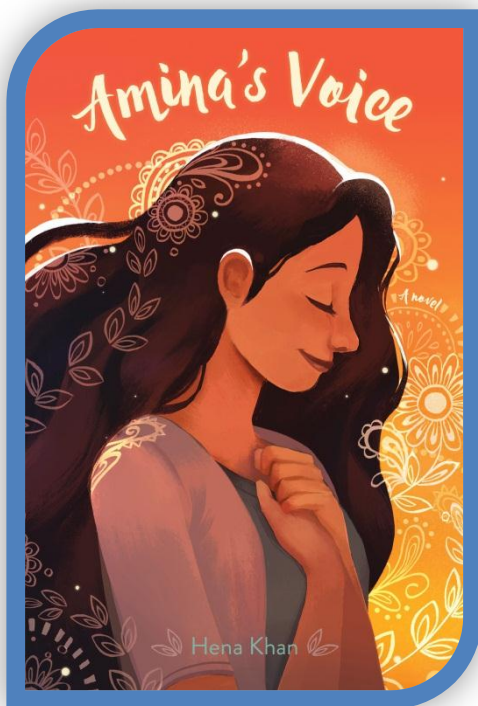




Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Division

About the Book of the Month Parent/Family Discussion Guide: 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 parents, guardians and family members, reading the books listed on this site with your children and integrating the concepts into your interactions with them is an excellent way to help children grapple with and learn about these important principles.



Title

Hena Khan (Author)

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

About the Book

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.

Conversation Starters

Whether you read the book aloud or your child reads it on their own and you discuss it later, use these open-ended questions to deepen the conversation. Remember not to judge their responses and to listen thoughtfully and engage in a give-and-take that helps them expand upon their understanding of the book and its themes.

- What happens in the story?
- Why do you think Soojin wants to change her name and how does Amina feel about that?
- How would you describe Amina and Soojin's friendship? How did it change throughout the book?
- Why do you think Amina's family was worried about the visit of Thaya Jaan? Have you ever had a relative visit from another place or country and how did that feel?
- What aspects of Pakistani culture did you learn about from the book?
- How was it for Amina and her brother Mustafa, to live in the U.S. and at the same time, maintain their Pakistani culture?
- How does Amina feel about Soojin's friendship with Emily? How do you know?
- What happened at the Islamic Center? How did the other community members respond? Has anything like that ever happened in our community?
- How does Amina and her family feel about what happened?
- Why do you think the book was called *Amina's Voice*? How did you feel when the story ended and what do you think will happen next?

Talking Points

Below are some important considerations to highlight in order to make this a learning opportunity for your child and your family.

1. Identity and Culture

Identity and culture are important aspects of *Amina's Voice*. Amina and her family are Muslim and Pakistani and they are also living in the United States and part of American culture. Reflect on the aspects of culture that are represented in the book and talk with your child about identity and the ways that our identity manifests through culture, values, connections and the way we experience the world. It is important to stress that many people in the U.S. "live in two worlds" and are part of more than one culture, as Amina and her family are. You can also discuss the ways that living in two worlds may be relevant to them or other people they know. Talk with your child about what aspects of their identity are important to them and discuss the extent to which they feel accepted in their family, community and school for who they are. Your family may or may not have a strong cultural identity and that can also be discussed. Explain that different groups have both similarities and differences from each other. Those differences are part of life and make it interesting and shouldn't be barriers to connecting with and forming friendships with people of different groups. Emphasize the many friendships in the book that were between people of different races and cultures.

2. Friendship

The book delved into friendship a great deal, exploring Amina's friendship with Soojin, Soojin's budding friendship with Emily and Amina's feelings about that, and Amina's friendship with Emily later in the book. Reflect on what happened in the book with those different friendships, when they took a negative turn, why and how they got back on track and even deepened as a result of the conflict. You may also want to discuss how Amina felt uncomfortable and maybe even betrayed as Soojin talked about changing her name; they had previously bonded over teachers' mispronouncing their names and feeling different in some ways than their other classmates. Ask your child if they have ever had friendships like these and/or problems and conflicts in those friendships and the extent to which they were able to resolve them. It's also important to stress that while conflict and disagreement happens in relationships and is part of life, often if you deal with it openly and honestly, the friendship can improve as a result.

3. Anti-Muslim Bigotry and Being an Ally

Talk with your child about the different examples throughout the book of bias and discrimination faced by Amina and her family for being Muslim. From being teased at school about her name, food, language, etc. to the vandalism that took place at the Islamic Center, anti-Muslim bigotry looms large in the book. Talk with your child about where they see examples of that in the book and explain how that is a real concern in our society, as we are hearing about and experiencing a great deal of anti-Muslim bigotry lately. In addition to the bias, there are examples of ally behavior and times when community members, especially after the vandalism at the Islamic Center, stepped up to help in a variety of ways. Community members expressed sadness and empathy and also offered to help. For example, people offered to help rebuild the Center, set up additional security, help with the clean-up efforts and provide the use of their church for the Islamic Center's carnival and Quran competition. Reflect on whether anything like that has ever happened in your community and about the response. It is important to emphasize that when bias, bigotry and tragic events happen, there are always people who want to help and it is useful to focus on those helpers. If your child has more questions or wants to do something, explore opportunities to learn more. [*Empowering Young People in the Aftermath of Hate.*](#)

Other Books You May Like

Gaby Lost and Found by Angela Cervantes, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/gaby-lost-and-found

My Name is Bilal by Asma Mobin-Uddin, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/my-name-is-bilal

Same Sun Here by Silas House & Neela Vaswani, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/same-sun-here

Towers Falling by Jewell Parker Rhodes, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/towers-falling

ADL Additional Resources

The following are curriculum and other resources on gender, sexism and social justice.

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

Parent, Family and Caregiver Resources

www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education/c/parent-family-and-caregivers.html

Strategies, tips, guiding principles and resources to help parents, family members and caregivers impart values and principles to the children in their lives.

Be an Ally: Six Simple Ways

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/be-an-ally-six-simple-ways

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

Definitions Related to Bias, Injustice and Bullying: For Educators, Parents and Family Members of Elementary Age Children

www.adl.org/education/resources/glossary-terms/definitions-related-to-bias-injustice-and-bullying

Definitions for words relating to bias, diversity, bullying and social justice concepts written for elementary-age children.

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 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.

Table Talk: Islamophobia and Being an Ally

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/table-talk/islamophobia-being-an-ally

Provides strategies and advice for talking with children about Muslim related issues and how to be an ally.

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)