

MEET YASMIN

"Readers will be charmed by this one-of-a-kind character and won't tire of her small but significant dilemmas. Faruqi nails the child's perspective, and illustrator Aly gives Yasmin life."

★—KIRKUS, STARRED REVIEW!

written by
Saadia Faruqi

art by
Hatem Aly



READER'S GUIDE for Yasmin the Explorer

—
TIPS FOR READING & DISCUSSING
EARLY CHAPTER BOOKS



Meet Yasmin

Yasmin Ahmad is a spirited young girl who's always on the lookout for those "a-ha" moments to help her solve life's little problems. A creative thinker and curious explorer, Yasmin and her multi-generational Pakistani family will delight and inspire readers.



About the Author

Saadia Faruqi is a Pakistani-American writer, interfaith activist, and cultural sensitivity trainer recently profiled in *O Magazine*. She is the author of the adult short story collection *Brick Walls: Tales of Hope & Courage from Pakistan*. Her essays have been published in *Huffington Post*, *Upworthy*, and *NBC Asian America*. She resides in Houston, Texas, with her husband and children.



About the Illustrator

Hatem Aly is an Egyptian-born illustrator whose work has been featured in multiple publications worldwide. He currently lives in New Brunswick, Canada, with his wife, son, and more pets than people.



TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR READING

Yasmin the Explorer

The *Yasmin* series appeals to pupils at a very exciting time in their reading lives: they have moved from picture books to early readers and chapter books. Pupils will be reading at different levels and have varying degrees of confidence. You may find that you need to change your interaction to match these variables.

- **Less Confident Readers** You may read the entire story aloud to a struggling or less confident reader or to group of readers. Ask pupils to read aloud the names of chapters as you get to each new one.
- **Confident Readers** More confident readers may want to take turns reading pages with you or other group members. You may also want to role-play different characters: one pupil can read Yasmin's dialogue, and another read the words of another character. You can read the text while pupils read the dialogue. This method works particularly well to keep pupils not only engaged, but focused on the words on the page as they seek out their "lines."
- **Above-Level Readers** If you are reading with a confident reader or reading group, allow pupils to read to you until they grow tired, then pick up where they left off. You can also invite group members to take turns reading chapters.

No matter your pupils' reading levels, when it is your turn to read, do so with expression, changing voices between characters and setting a mood with your tone, volume and intonations. The *Yasmin* series centres around a young girl excited to try new things. As such, your voice should alternate between confident and nervous to match Yasmin's moods.

It is essential to monitor pupil comprehension as you read. To make sure pupils understand what they've read before moving on, ask *who, what, why, when, where* and *how* questions about content and the literary craft. Try to sculpt most of your questions around higher-level reading strategies, such as inferring, comparing and contrasting, predicting, analysing and synthesizing. Pause to ask if pupils have questions. Teach pupil strategies to monitor comprehension, such as rereading and pausing to summarise what they've read before continuing.

Possible questions:

- *What details do you think are important?*
- *What is the main idea of the story?*
- *Can you infer a theme of this story?*
- *Why does [a character] act that way?*
- *Compare the setting in the story to our setting here.*

Engage Pupils

Encourage pupils to make predictions for the story by asking:

What new things do you hope to try? Explain that, in this book, the main character explores a fun passion that could lead to a future career. Help pupils make connections between their own lives and Yasmin's.



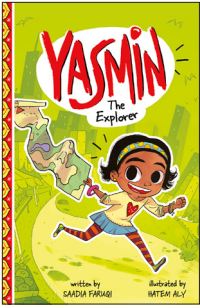
BEFORE READING

- **Allow pupils to preview the book.** Begin with the cover. Read aloud the title and the names of the author and illustrator. Allow pupils to look at the art. Ask: *What do you think this book is going to be about?* After pupils have provided their predictions, ask: *What evidence did you use to make that prediction?* Point out that their predictions were based on clues in the art and other elements found right on the cover. Explain that they will be meeting a girl named Yasmin and sharing some adventures with her.
- **Discuss how different cultures enrich a community.** Get pupils thinking about the importance of learning about various cultures and sharing elements of their own. Ask if any pupils in your class have moved here from another country or have family members that have done so. Invite them to share cultural traditions that they enjoy, such as holidays, meals, music, and stories such as folktales and fairy tales. Using their examples, emphasise how people from different cultures enrich a community, school, and country.
- **Use a map or globe.** Point out that the author is Pakistani-American, which means the author moved to the United States from Pakistan. Pupils may not be aware of where Pakistan or the United States are located. On a map or globe, point out their location.
- **Analyse art.** Now instruct pupils to study the art. Draw pupils' attention to the clothes hanging up. Ask for volunteers who may know what a *sari* or *kameez* is. If no one does, explain that a sari is a long, loose dress, usually made of silk. A kameez is a long, loose-fitting shirt worn by both men and women. Both styles originated in the Indian subcontinent and the middle east. If time permits, explain that the *shalwar kameez* consists of a long shirt (kameez) and baggy pants (shalwar). It is the national dress of Pakistan! Guide pupils to consider that their "normal" school clothes may not be considered "normal" in another country. Use this to jump into a thoughtful discussion about how "normal" or "other" is relative to what we are used to.
- **Make predictions.** Challenge pupils: *Looking at the drawing, make a prediction about Yasmin—what words do you think can describe her personality? What clues in the art did you use to make those inferences?* Guide pupils to notice her playful and confident pose, as well as the bright colours she wears.
- **Preview the text and art.** Open the book and allow pupils a few minutes to do so. If possible, take note which pages and illustrations they find most interesting, so you can focus on those later.
- **Analyse text features.** Ask pupils to volunteer text features they see: a Table of Contents, chapter titles, and so on. Explain that these features help to structure and organise a book. Titles allow for a "sneak peek" about what the pupils will read, as do chapter titles. Chapters also allow for a natural stopping point. (Note: Don't feel locked in to a chapter-by-chapter reading format. If you notice pupils becoming restless, choose an earlier stopping point and engage in one of the hands-on, related activities provided later in this guide).
- See the *Connecting Literacy and Content* section on each title for tips, activities and extended learning opportunities to explore while reading. Take special note of cross-curricular connections to standards that cover PSHE and art, with extensions for maths and science.

Introduce the Content

Preview Yasmin the Explorer

Tell pupils that they are going to read a book about a young girl named Yasmin. She is spunky, fun and likes to try new things—even if they scare her. Say: *You may find that Yasmin is a lot like you, but also very different.* Have pupils partner and look through the book's illustrations. Give pupils time to discuss differences and similarities they see between themselves and Yasmin.



CONNECTING LITERACY AND CONTENT

Yasmin the Explorer

Reading Age: 6 - 8

Literature

Content: discusses a schoolgirl who tries becoming an explorer.

CONNECT TO LITERATURE

Build Content Background

Engage Pupils

Connect to PSHE Create a scavenger hunt in the classroom (or school, or playground, if permitted) in which the clues must be interpreted from a map.

- Explain to pupils that you have created this treasure hunt with a goal of finding “treasure” as an explorer would—using a map.
- You might wish to have pupils work in pairs or small groups. Clues may lead to hidden prizes, certificates or other small objects you think pupils would like.
- Your map may use a simple coordinate grid system, or, if you find pupils can identify them, include more sophisticated map elements such as a compass rose, scale, and a key to symbols. You can include arrows showing the object’s positional relation to common areas in the school, too.
- Once pupils have completed the activity, ask: *What do you know about explorers? Do you think you would like to be an explorer?* Allow pupils to share what they know about explorers, from what they do, to their historical contributions. Have them turn to a partner and explain why they would or would not want to be an explorer.

Tell pupils: *We will be reading about the adventures of Yasmin, an adventurous girl. In this story, Yasmin tries her hand at being an explorer by creating and using a map of her hometown.*

- Using a globe map, have pupils find their own country, and if possible, hometown, and use scale to determine its approximate distance.
- Ask: *Can any of you show me where your ancestors came from on the globe or map?* Allow volunteers to determine the location, and distance of other countries. If possible, have pupils describe the relative location of these countries using directional terms.
- Encourage pupils to share the story of their family’s migration to their present community. Ask: *How did your family travel? How did they settle in this town? Why did come to this country?* If possible use the reasons given to point out that people still immigrate here for similar reasons.
- Be sensitive to the fact that some pupils may not know their family history. If more appropriate, be prepared to share origin stories of well-known local community members, or historic figures they are learning about in other content areas.

Discuss Text Features

Turn to the Table of Contents and tell pupils: the story we are going to read is called “Yasmin the Explorer.” Allow pupils to flip through its pages and find the chapters and chapter titles.

- Ask: *What can you infer from the chapter titles?* Guide pupils to realise that the chapter titles provide insight into what the chapter might be about.
- Ask: *What do you think the first chapter will be about?* Repeat the question as you get to each new chapter.

WHILE READING

- **Practice literacy skills.** As you begin reading, establish that the text moves from the left page to the right, as later pages will have text that curves around art.
- **Make inferences using art.** Explain to pupils looking closely at illustrations can reveal more details about the story.
Invite inference.
 - o Have them study the front cover, and then ask: *What can you tell about where Yasmin lives?* (She lives in a city). Ask for picture clues they analysed to get their answer (There are tall skyscrapers in the background, and she's running on a pavement).
 - o Then, have pupils turn to pages 9-11 and ask *What can you infer about Yasmin's family through the pictures?* (She is close to her dad; her mum wears a *hijab*, so she must come from a culture where these are worn).
 - o When they have finished reading the pages, ask: *Why might the artist have decided to include these pictures?* (In case someone didn't know from reading the text what a *hijab* is because the text does not state it; that Yasmin sat with her dad in his chair).
 - o Guide pupils to see that the pictures can provide information that is not written in the text. Explain *Through the pictures, we get to know each of these characters more deeply than if we only had information in the text.*
- **Make inferences using context clues.** Next, reread aloud a sentence that uses the word *Baba*, the sentence on page 8 that includes *jaan*, and on page 10, the sentence about Mama getting her *hijab*. Explain that many times, an author uses context clues to help you determine the meaning of unknown words and phrases.
 - o Ask pupils: *Who is Baba? How do you know?* Make sure that pupils notice that the context clues here come in the form of pictures. (Baba is Yasmin's father).
 - o Repeat the questions with the word *jaan*, pointing out the textual context clues: *in this case, the author defined the word within the sentence: "his pet name for her."* Guide pupils to conclude that context clues may be found in pictures, or words within the sentence containing an unknown word, or in sentences nearby it.
- **Connect to PSHE** Use the unknown words to connect to PSHE.
 - o Ask: *What do all of these unknown words have in common?* (They are not English). Point out that the author never states outright that Yasmin and her family have Pakistani roots, but her choice of these words lets the reader infer that her family is likely from a country where English is not the main language.
 - o Explain that using these words helps the author highlight Yasmin's cultural experience. Say: *The author highlights Yasmin's cultural background this way. It may not be just like yours, but the plot shows us that Yasmin has a lot in common with any kid, no matter what their differences.*
 - o Ask: *How is Yasmin similar to you or kids your age?* (Possible answer: I want to be an explorer; she colours and makes maps; she's excited to go out with her mum to the market). Emphasise that people of all cultural or religious backgrounds have unique traditions, but we are all still more similar than we are different.
 - o Encourage connection between the text and personal experience and society by asking individual pupils to share customs their family practices that others might find surprising. This might include foods, clothes, celebrations or traditions. As a class, list some traditions that are rooted in the community that unite members, despite their differences.
- **Monitor comprehension.** Continue to assess pupils' understanding by asking *who, what, when, where, why* and *how* questions. For example:
 - o *What symbols or locations does Yasmin include on her map?* (their house, the market, and the park).
 - o *Why is Yasmin excited to go to the market with her mum?* (She wants to use her map and be an explorer).
- **Use art and textual context clues.** As you begin Chapter 2, ask pupils to use context clues to determine the season. (Spring; it smells like flower and the air is fresh. The picture shows light green trees).
- **Use sequence words.** Have pupils summarise, in sequence, the additions Yasmin makes to her map. Encourage them to use sequencing words such as *first, then, next, etc.* Ask pupils: *Why is Yasmin keeping track of all these stops?* (To make her map more complete).
- **Make mental images.** Call pupils' attention to the setting of Chapter 2. Ask: *Where did Yasmin and her mother go?* (To the farmer's market).
 - o Return to the description of the air being "fresh" and smelling "like flowers." Explain to pupils that these words let pupils create mental images of the setting. Explain that, *When you create mental images, you visualise or imagine that you are in the setting being described.*
 - o Ask pupils to name their five senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch).
 - o Then have them look through the chapter and name descriptive words and phrases the author uses to help readers visualise the setting. (The street was crowded; people everywhere; fruit stands next to a pavement, air smells fresh).

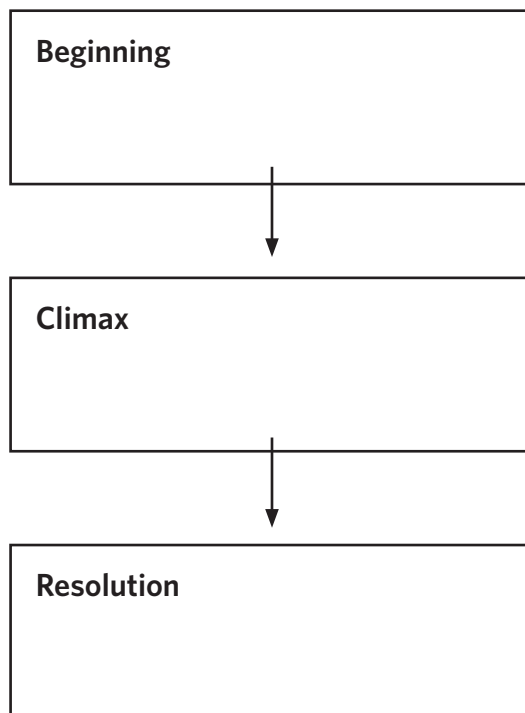
- o Ask: *What details do you imagine based on information the author included?* (I imagine it smells like springtime, fresh bread and fruit; the air is warm, there are voices of many vendors calling out, there are many colours because of the balloons and people in different clothing etc.). If pupils have a hard time, help them to use their other senses to imagine what the farmer's market would feel like.
- **Connect to PSHE** Ask pupils if any have visited a farmer's market, or if they know what one is. Explain that farmers, who produce food, become sellers at a farmer's market: selling what they grow. Yasmin and her mother are buyers, or consumers.
- **Analyse figurative language.** On page 16, the author writes that Yasmin is "itching" to explore. Use this opportunity to discuss figurative language—descriptive language that doesn't mean exactly what it says. Explain that authors use devices to help readers form a mental picture of an event or setting, or to get to understand a character better, or evoke a certain feeling in a reader. One of these devices is figurative language.
 - o In this case, ask pupils: *Have you ever had a really bad itch that you couldn't reach to scratch?*
 - o Demonstrate the feeling of desperation and eagerness to soothe the itch. Explain that the phrase "itching to" means a person is really anxious to get do something.
 - o Ask: *What was Yasmin desperate to do?* (explore the park).
 - o *Why did the author use the word "explore?"* (Yasmin is imagining she's an explorer finding new places).
- **Make predictions.** After reading page 16, ask pupils to predict what they think will happen next. Encourage volunteers to share the clues they used to make their predictions. If pupils struggle, guide them to notice that Yasmin tells her mother she's leaving; that the park is far enough away to need binoculars, and that Mama's back is turned to her. Instruct pupils to look for evidence that confirms or rejects their predictions as they continue to read.
- **Connect text to self.** When pupils realise that Yasmin can't find her mother, have pupils confirm their predictions or volunteer those that were incorrect. Use this opportunity to connect to social-emotional learning by calling attention to Yasmin's reaction on page 19 when she makes her realisation:
 - o "Yasmin took a deep breath. 'I'm a brave explorer,' she reminded herself. 'I can find my way back to Mama.'"
 - o Ask pupils what they do when they are afraid: How do you find bravery when you need it? How do you calm yourself down when you're anxious or upset?
- **Monitor comprehension.** Challenge pupils to match the descriptions of places Yasmin has labeled (page 23) on her map with her map on the preceding spread.
- **Connect text to self.** Ask: *How did Yasmin finally find her mother?* (She saw her mother's blue hijab). Point out how lucky it was that Mama didn't blend into the crowd. Guide pupils to see that differences, and things that make us stand out, are often what makes us strong.
 - o Ask: *What makes you stand out?*
 - o *What do you like about it?*
- **Check comprehension** Before wrapping up the story, check comprehension: *Why does Yasmin cry?* (She is relieved to find her mother.) *What did Yasmin learn from the experience?* (To bring her map AND Mama when she goes exploring). *How can you apply her lesson to your own life?* (I can make sure I don't wander off to explore without a trusted adult).
 - o You may wish to invite partners to summarise the story.

Extend the Learning

- **Below-Level:** Invite pupils to work in small groups to be "explorers" by finding photos online of Pakistan's scenic landscape and historic buildings. Have pupils print out their favourites and label or caption them to tell what they are, and why they are important. Pupils should hang the pictures up and allow classmates to do a Gallery Walk to see the photos. You may wish to print out a map of Pakistan and have pupils stick pins where each can be found. If time permits, you may also wish to have pupils repeat the process, this time exploring a country such as one from which their ancestors came, one which interests them, or one discussed in another content area.
- **On-Level:** Turn back to pages 20-21 and have pupils look at Yasmin's map. Invite pupils to create their own maps: the town, their trip to school, or the school itself, for example. Challenge them to include places of local significance—a park, monument, important building, etc.
- **On-Level:** Take a few moments to teach cardinal instructions. Display a physical map of the United Kingdom and challenge pupils, one at a time, to identify well-known geographical features. Instruct pupils to place a finger randomly on the map and follow oral directions on which way to move it: North, East, South or West, in order to find the landmark.
- **Above-Level:** Have pupils research a famous explorer using reliable web sources. Assign small groups an explorer to present on. Have them describe the route they took, what they hoped to find, and what they found. Instruct pupils on good presenting skills: speaking at a good rate and volume, using gestures and making eye contact. Make sure pupils practice good listening skills and provide positive and constructive feedback. Help pupils choose graphics to include if need be.

AFTER READING

- Allow time for questions and answers pupils may have about each text.
- Assess pupil understanding by having them summarise each story. Explain: *A summary is a retelling of the most important parts of a story. Summaries don't include every detail—just the details necessary to make sense of the story. A summary tells the story in the same order of events.* Draw a story map on the board like the one below.



- Model summarising for the story: *I'm going to separate the story into three parts: the beginning, the climax (or most exciting part) and the resolution-the ending.* Model rereading the beginning before writing in the text box. Talk out deciding which details are important or not as you continue, before filling in the other boxes. Pupils can then share their work with the class.
- Bring to the forefront the ways in which someone can be different and still be like everyone else. Draw a Venn diagram on the board. On one circle, write "Yasmin" and over the other "me." Encourage pupils to look through the story for differences, which will appear in each of the outer circles. All the many things they have in common should take center place between the circles. If pupils have difficulty, point out possible similarities: she goes to school; projects make her nervous, etc.
- Turn to the activities in the back of the book.
 - o Allow pupils time to discuss the *Think About It, Talk About It*. Act as a facilitator, circulating and taking note of pupils who aren't as willing to participate. You may wish to place quieter pupils in pairs or smaller groups to elicit sharing. You may also share your own thoughts if discussion seems to stall.
 - o When pupils read the *Learn Urdu with Yasmin!* page, make a fun activity that will also help pupils practice using context clues. Challenge pupils to sit in pairs, and to say to each other sentences using one of the Urdu words while their partner sits without looking at the book. Challenge the partner to guess or remember what each word means. Remind pupils to include context clues to help their partner. For example, "I love my baba," doesn't really include clues. However, "My baba has a beard and is very tall," provides a few more clues.
 - o Pupils can try the fun and practical projects in class or for homework.
- Ensure pupils have access to books on any topics that interested them: careers in exploring, art, architecture, or design, for example. Find titles at the library about the daily life of a child in Pakistan or another country other than theirs. Allow pupils to read the books during independent reading time. Encourage them to write notes connecting their own lives to those of children in different countries.

RESPOND BY WRITING, SPEAKING AND LISTENING

RESPOND BY WRITING

- Recall what a *simile* is, and name an example already discussed. As a class, have pupils search for other similes and make a list on the board. Then, have pupils write their own simile, describing a season using a simile. (Scribe for younger children).
- Assign pupils a paragraph or drawing that describes a time they turned an accident into a good thing. Have pupils try to use at least one simile, and words that might set a mood for their piece. The text should be organised in chronological order as this one was; remind pupils of the transition words they used when describing the events in a text: *first, next, then, etc.* Inform pupils that they'll be sharing their narrative with a partner. Help pupils revise and edit for grammar and spelling, correcting any errors they notice.
- Assign pupils the job of writing a short expository piece describing a contribution a person from another nationality has made to society. They may choose their own focus, in terms of nationality and contribution. Before pupils begin, review with them the types of sources they should be using to ensure reliability and validity. Encourage pupils to write creatively, using descriptive words. Have them check their pieces for correct punctuation, spelling and capitalisation.
- Ask pupils to consider which story they liked the best. Have them write an opinion essay explaining their claim. Make sure they provide "evidence" from the text to make their claim convincing. You may need to teach pupils what their claim is: a sentence that states their opinion. Also make sure they understand that evidence will be the information they use to convince others that their opinion is the right one.

RESPOND BY SPEAKING AND LISTENING

- Have pupils act out the story. Pupils must work together to choose roles.
- If it's more feasible, apply any of the writing topics as a speaking and listening topic. For example, have pupils relate a story about a time they turned an accident into a good thing. When relating personal stories, encourage them to use descriptive language so the listener can better picture the story.
- If pupils have read multiple *Yasmin* stories, consider the different career paths she explores and ask *Which career would be the most enjoyable?* from the stories you have read. Have pupils consider the question until they have decided on an answer. Tell pupils to come up with three reasons to support their decision. Then, pair pupils and have them argue that their opinion is the correct one. Tell pupils to use text evidence from the book, as well the other three reasons they listed. Encourage pupils to debate and try to come to an agreement. Remind pupils to listen to their partners respectfully, and to present their own ideas in a respectful manner.
- Have pupils imagine the conversations that occurred between the author, Saadia Faruqi and the illustrator, Hatem Aly as they worked together to make the book. Choose pupils to play the role of news reporter, Saadia and Hatem. Supply the reporter with an initial list of interview questions for them on the process of making the book. Instruct pupils to listen carefully and take notes of any questions that may arise. After the interview is done, the reporter should allow pupils to ask their questions. Model asking a question first, doing so respectfully. Have pupils note that you're speaking loudly and clearly, using words that the audience understands. Pupils should do the same.
- Give pupils a homework: to write five interview questions they might ask someone who moved to their town from another country. Facilitate a class collaboration to whittle all questions to a list of just 10 that would be appropriate and informative to ask. For example, pupils may ask how traditions were handed down to them, whether they feel these traditions are still being carried on or forgotten. You may wish to allow pupils to practice good listening skills by conducting mock interviews with each other.
- If possible, have an older adult who immigrated come to the classroom. Ask them the top 10 questions pupils picked.