



THE PROUDEST BLUE

BY IBTIHAJ MUHAMMAD & S. K. ALI, ILLUSTRATED BY HATEM ALY

BEFORE READING

Based on the cover, what do you think this story is about? How do you think it will begin/end? After reading, revisit your answer to this question. Were your predictions correct? Consider the subtitle: 'A Story of Hijab and Family'. What do students already know about wearing hijab? Do they have any questions about it? Make a list of statements and questions the students may have about wearing hijab.

EXPLORING THE TEXT

The first day of wearing hijab is an important moment for Asiya and her family. Does your religion, culture or family have any special traditions that are important to you? What does this tradition mean to you?

"Some people won't understand your hijab... but if you understand who you are, one day they will too." Discuss this quote with the class, and revisit the statements and questions you had about wearing hijab. Have students' understanding of hijab changed? Can the class now answer any of the questions they may have had?

"Don't carry around the hurtful words that others say. Drop them. They belong only to those that said them." What do you think this statement means? How are Asiya and Faizah affected by hurtful words in the story? Use this quote to have a class discussion about the powerful effect words can have on others. What is your understanding of prejudice? What are the dangers of making judgements about people based on race, gender, age,

sexuality, etc. rather than understanding that every person is different? How is prejudice shown in *The Proudest Blue*?

What policies does your school have in place regarding bullying, racism and prejudice? Can you add to or improve these policies? What should you do if you witness a student or teacher demonstrating bullying, racist or prejudiced behaviour?

EXPLORING THE ILLUSTRATIONS

Examine several of the spreads and have a class discussion about the following:

- What is the composition (i.e. where are the key elements placed)? Are the characters large or small? In the foreground or background? Do they seem powerful or weak; happy or sad; scared or confident?
- What are the characters on this page doing and where are they looking? Why are they doing this? What effect does this have?
- Is the illustration framed or does it take up the whole page? Why do you think Hatem Aly illustrated it this way?
- Do the colours change from spread to spread? Make a list of the colours used in each area (this is called the colour palette). Why do you think he chose these colour palettes?

Asiya, Faizah and their friends are in colour and illustrated in detail, but the bullies are not. Why do you think the illustrator made this choice? How does it affect you as a reader? Have a wider discussion about how bullying is

presented in *The Proudest Blue*, including how Asiya and her friends react to the bullies.

Consider the spreads where Faizah is describing her sister's hijab. How are they similar or different to other spreads in the book? You could consider the text, the colours, and the size of the characters. Why do you think they've been presented in this way? How does it make you feel?

FURTHER ACTIVITIES

Faizah goes through a range of emotions in the story. Look at each spread and discuss how she may be feeling, and how you can tell using clues from the text and illustrations. For each emotion, ask students to consider when they have experienced a similar emotion and how it made them feel.

Family is an important theme in *The Proudest Blue*. Ask students to write a short piece about a family member they feel close to and share it with the class. Read the author notes from Ibtihaj Muhammad and S. K. Ali. How did they make you feel? Did they inspire or encourage you? Research Ibtihaj Muhammad and make a fact sheet about her achievements.

