

A READING GROUP GUIDE

TO BOOKS BY

Hena Khan



A READING GROUP GUIDE TO

Amina's Voice

HC: 9781481492065

PB: 9781481492072

eBook: 9781481492089

Ages 8-12

Awards & Honors:

- ALA Notable Children's Books
- CCBC Choices (Cooperative Children's Book Council)
- CBC/NCSS (Notable Social Studies Trade Book)
- Texas Bluebonnet Master List
- South Asia Book Award Highly Commended Title
- NCTE Charlotte Huck Outstanding Fiction Recommended Title

Background/Summary

The first year of middle school is tricky. Suddenly, Amina's best friend, Soojin, starts talking about changing her name and, even worse, spending time with Emily—a girl that used to make fun of them! Amina's older brother seems to be getting into a lot of trouble for his grades, and now he wants to play basketball instead of studying. To make matters worse, her uncle comes to visit from Pakistan, and her parents seem to be trying awfully hard to impress him. With so many changes, it's hard to know how to be a good friend, sister, and daughter. But when Amina's mosque is vandalized, she learns that the things that connect us will always be stronger than the things that try to tear us apart.

Discussion Questions

1. Describe Amina's feelings about music. What keeps Amina from telling her teacher that she would like to sing a solo? What could Amina do to overcome her fear? Have you ever been afraid to do something you wanted to do? What happened?
2. Why does Soojin consider changing her name? Why do you think Amina is uncomfortable with the idea of Soojin changing her name? Have you ever wanted to change your own name?
3. Why do you think Emily decides to stop being friends with Julie and to start being friends with Soojin and Amina? Why doesn't Amina trust her at first? How would you react if someone who had been mean to you in the past tried to become your friend?
4. What causes tension between Amina's parents and her brother? How do they resolve their differences? Have you ever wanted to do something your parents did not want you to do? Have your parents ever required you to do something you did not want to do? How did you handle the situation?
5. How is Thaya Jaan related to Amina? How can you tell that Amina's parents respect Thaya Jaan? What do they agree about? What do they disagree about?
6. Why is Amina initially unhappy with the group she is assigned to work with on her class Oregon Trail project? What is the best thing about working with a group? What is the hardest thing about working with a group? What does Amina learn from working with Bradley, Soojin, and Emily?

7. Describe what happens at Amina’s Sunday School. Do you attend any religious services or classes? If so, how is Amina’s experience similar to yours? How is it different?
8. Both Amina and Soojin have been teased because of the food they bring to school or the way their food smells. Why do you think people tease or bully kids who are different? If you were in Amina or Soojin’s position, how would you respond? If you encounter someone from a different cultural background, how should you respond to them?
9. Discuss the role that forgiveness plays in the novel. Who does Amina need to forgive? Whom does she need to ask for forgiveness? Do you think it is more difficult to ask for forgiveness or to forgive someone else?
10. How does jealousy threaten Soojin and Amina’s friendship? What does Amina learn about Soojin, Emily, and herself as a result? Do you think Soojin is a good friend to Amina? Is Amina a good friend to Soojin?
11. In the novel, Amina is trusted with secrets. Do you think she’s right to keep Mustafa’s secret? Should she have kept Emily’s secret? Why is it sometimes hard to keep secrets? Are there ever secrets that you should not keep?
12. Amina’s parents and Thaya Jaan disagree about whether or not music is forbidden. In every family, people disagree about the way to raise children and about what types of behavior should be allowed. How does Amina navigate the conflicting viewpoints in her own family? Have you ever had to navigate a similar situation? If so, how did you handle it?
13. What is backbiting? Why does Amina feel guilty of backbiting? In your opinion, did she backbite Emily? Explain your answer.
14. Amina’s parents are concerned that Thaya Jaan will not be happy when he visits because, as they say, “You know there’s some bad feeling in this country toward Muslims, and all this negative talk in the news these days.” When Thaya Jaan is in America, what evidence of bad feelings toward Muslims does he witness? What good things about America and acts of kindness does he witness? What does he conclude about life in America?
15. What is vandalism? How did the description of the vandalism of Amina’s mosque make you feel? How do you think you would feel if your school or place of worship was vandalized? Explain how this act of violence ends up bringing Amina’s community together.
16. The novel ends with a message of change. In literature, characters that change are called *dynamic* characters. Almost all the characters in *Amina’s Voice* are dynamic characters. Explain how each character changes.

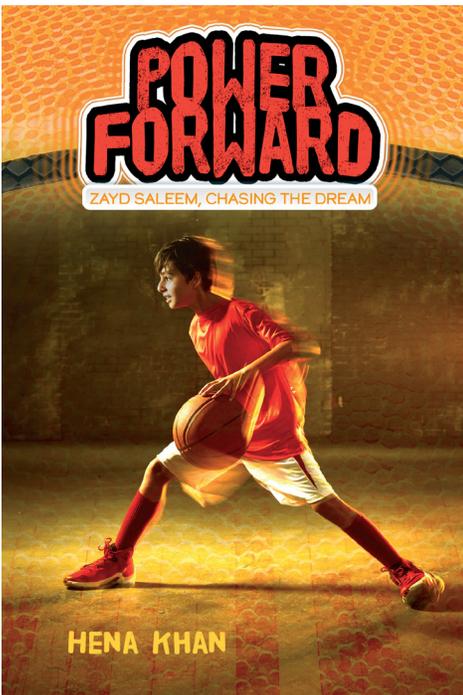
Extension Activities

1. The characters in *Amina’s Voice* have different cultural backgrounds. Amina’s family is from Pakistan, Soojin’s family is Korean, and Emily’s grandmother was Polish. Research the cultural background of a character in the novel or research your own family’s cultural heritage and participate in a multicultural celebration where you present your research to your class.
2. *Amina’s Voice* includes vocabulary and references to Islamic and Pakistani culture. Choose an unfamiliar vocabulary word and research what it means. Working with your classmates, create a word wall for the book.
3. Food plays an important role in both Soojin and Amina’s families. Research the food of Pakistan or Korea and try cooking a traditional dish at home or eating in a Korean, Indian, or Pakistani restaurant to sample one of the foods that Khan writes about (ex. kimchee, masala chai, naan, gulab jamun, or bulgogi). Write a food review of the dish or dishes you sampled, including a recipe so that your classmates can try the food at home if they wish.
4. One of the conflicts that Soojin must resolve is the question of whether or not to change her name. Ask your parents the story behind your own name. How did they select it? What does your name mean?
5. After Amina’s mosque is vandalized, Soojin’s church volunteers to host the Islamic Center’s carnival and Quran competition. What common values bring these communities together? Why is it important for people of different faiths and cultural backgrounds to be kind to one another and work together?

6. Amina is given a class project to compete with her classmates in a game called *The Oregon Trail*. What was the Oregon Trail? With a group of classmates, play this game and see how you do as settlers. The original version of the game is available for free online, but it has also been reimagined as both an app and a card game. What did playing this game teach you about working together?
7. In Sunday school, Amina hears the story of Prophet Yusuf and his jealous brothers. How is this story similar to the story of Joseph and the coat of many colors? Examine another story, such as the story of the great flood or a folktale like “Cinderella” or “Beauty and the Beast” that has different versions in different cultures.
8. Amina chooses the classic Sam Cooke song “A Change Is Gonna Come” to sing at the concert. Look up the lyrics and research the history of the song. What inspired Cooke to write the song? Why do you think the song became known as an anthem of the civil rights movement? Why do you think Amina relates to this particular song?
9. Throughout the book, the author uses figurative language to describe Amina’s feelings. For example, Amina describes jealousy as “a fresh shock . . . that courses through my veins like I had stuck my pen in an electrical socket.” Using Amina’s descriptions as a model, write a list of similes that describe the way different emotions feel.
10. Soojin and her family are very excited about becoming American citizens. Research the pathway to American citizenship. How difficult is it to become a United States citizen? What happens at a naturalization ceremony? If you have a family member that has gone through the naturalization process, ask them what it was like. Did they do anything special to celebrate the ceremony?
11. After the mosque is vandalized, Imam Malik says, “Muslims have far more friends than enemies in this country. Some people don’t understand Islam or are misled and fear us. But I’m getting so many calls of support from our friends and neighbors in the community.” One quality that makes America special is the fact that we are welcoming of different cultures. What steps can your class or community take to support and be kind to one another and to people from different cultural backgrounds?
12. Imagine this book as the first part of a series. What do you think is next for Amina, Soojin, Emily, and Mustafa? Create a book jacket for an imagined sequel to *Amina’s Voice*. Include a brief synopsis of your imagined sequel.

A READING GROUP GUIDE TO

ZAYD SALEEM, CHASING THE DREAM

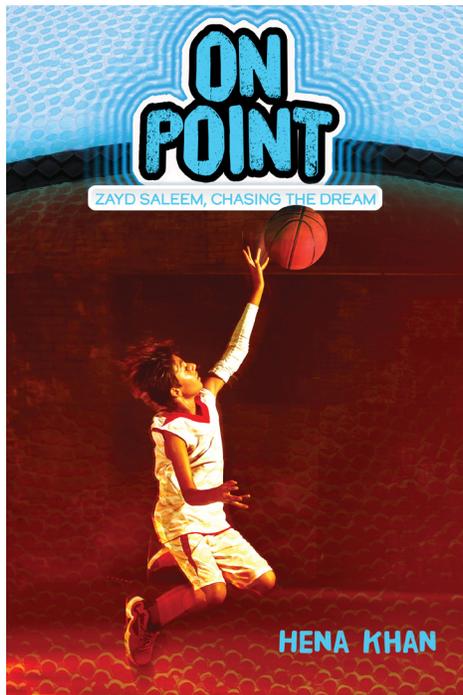


#1: *Power Forward*

HC: 9781534411982 | PB: 9781534411999

eBook: 9781534412002

Ages 7-10; Grades 2-5

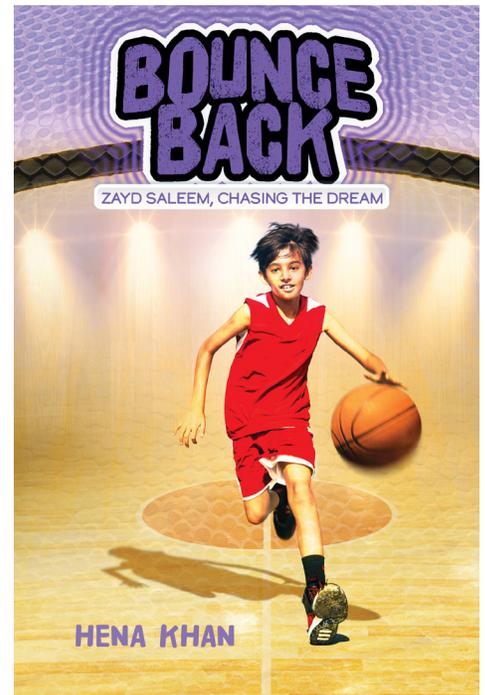


#2: *On Point*

HC: 9781534412026 | PB: 9781534412019

eBook: 9781534412033

Ages 7-10; Grades 2-5



#3: *Bounce Back*

HC: 9781534412057 | PB: 9781534412040

eBook: 9781534412064

Ages 7-10; Grades 2-5

These questions and activities can be used with *Power Forward* and *On Point*.

Background/Summary

Fourth grader Zayd Saleem is not just going to be a professional basketball player. He's going to be a star—the first Pakistani-American kid to make it to the NBA. However, life can get complicated, especially when your dreams are different from the plans your family has for you. Zayd has a loving and close-knit family, but what his parents want him to do (and eat) is not always the same as what he wants for himself. After his favorite uncle, Jamal Mamoo, helps him learn to stand up for himself, it's his turn to be a leader and help his best friend, Adam, and Uncle Jamal to follow their dreams as well.

Discussion Questions

1. Make a family tree for Zayd, including a description of each member of his family. Can you relate to his relationships with his mom, dad, sister, uncle, or grandparents? How is his family similar to yours? How is it different?
2. How does Zayd respond to stress and anxiety? Do you think there is anything that seems to help him when he is feeling anxious? What do you do when you are anxious or worried about something?
3. Why do you think Zayd's parents want him to continue to play the violin? Have your parents ever wanted you to do something that you didn't want to do? How did you handle it?
4. How does Zayd initially deal with the conflict between his desire to focus on earning a spot on the gold team and

his parents' wish for him to pursue orchestra? How does his mother find out that he has stopped going to orchestra practice? What lesson does he learn from his mistake?

5. Zayd has a very close relationship with his uncle, Jamal Mamoo. How does Jamal encourage Zayd? Why is it important to have an adult in your life whom you can trust?
6. Zayd comes from a Pakistani American family. What cultural traditions do they have that are different and similar from your family's traditions?
7. Three generations of the Saleem family are featured in these two books: grandparents, parents, and children (Zayd and Zara). Do you see any differences in each generation's habits, styles, and preferences? Why might that be?
8. Why does Zayd's mother ask him to keep a food diary? What does he learn about himself as a result of keeping the diary? Have you ever thought about the way different foods make you feel?
9. Why does Zayd choose John Wall to research for his role model project? What qualities do you think make someone a good role model?
10. How does Zayd's family show that they support one another? Why do you think Zayd resisted telling his parents how he really felt about basketball and orchestra?
11. The book titles *Power Forward* and *On Point* are phrases that have both literal meanings and figurative connotations. How does each title reflect each book's message? The big ideas or messages in books are called themes. Can you relate the title of each book to its theme?
12. The first line of *On Point* states: "Sometimes when you finally get something you really want, it ends up not being what you hoped it would be." Why does Zayd say this? Have you ever felt this way?
13. What does playing basketball teach Zayd about being a good teammate? What is your favorite sport or activity? What can you do to become a better teammate, classmate, or friend?
14. Why is planning the wedding stressful for Jamal Mamoo and Nadia Auntie? What advice does Zayd give them?
15. What causes conflict in Zayd and Adam's relationship? How do they resolve this conflict? Have you ever argued with a friend? How did you resolve your differences?
16. Why is Zayd nervous about filling Adam's position on the basketball team?
17. What are important qualities in a leader? Do you think Zayd will be a good team leader?
18. When we talk about conflict in literature, we describe it as either internal (an emotional or mental conflict inside a character) or external. What types of conflict does Zayd face in these books? Are all of his conflicts resolved?
19. In fiction, we use the term *dynamic* to describe a character that changes. By the end of *On Point*, how has Zayd changed?

Extension Activities

1. Zayd's family is from Pakistan. What did you learn about Pakistani culture from *Power Forward* and *On Point*? After reading Hena Khan's books, make a list of questions you have about Pakistan and research the answers to those questions.
2. We all have cultural and family traditions that are important parts of our identities. How much do you know about your own cultural heritage? Prepare an informative speech, presentation, or video to teach your classmates about one of your family's traditions.
3. Food plays a big part in Zayd's family members' lives, especially in their celebrations. Have you ever tried Pakistani food? Choose one of the foods that Zayd mentions and decide how best to try it; you could recreate it from a recipe, visit a Pakistani restaurant, or find it in an international food market.

4. Who is your role model? Just as Zayd researches John Wall for his school project, research the life of someone you admire. After learning more about them, are they still your role model? Which of their traits and accomplishments do you value most? Did you learn anything about them that surprised you?
5. How would you describe Zayd and his experiences in *Power Forward* and *On Point* to other readers? Design a poster or a storyboard for a book trailer that you feel captures Zayd’s personality and how you felt while reading these books. Think about what makes a poster or trailer so compelling, including images, taglines, and a color scheme.
6. Being a successful athlete often means learning how to function well on a team. As a class, brainstorm some qualities you find important in a teammate or a coach. Then choose a partner and role-play a conversation between two teammates or between an athlete and a coach in which both display some of these qualities; now, role-play the same scenario again where one person does not display any of these qualities. How do the dynamics and end results of the conversations change? What do you think are the most challenging and rewarding elements of being a member of a sports team? Where else outside of a sports team might you need to work closely with others to accomplish a goal?

These questions and activities can be used with *Bounce Back*.

Background/Summary

In the third installment of Hena Khan’s Zayd Saleem Chasing the Dream series, fourth-grader Zayd is having a great season on the Gold Team. Now that his best friend Adam is playing football and not basketball, he hopes that Coach Wheeler will choose to make him the new team leader. Everything seems to be going according to plan until an injury forces him to look at the game he loves and his role on the team in a new way. With only a few weeks until the championship and his favorite uncle’s wedding, will Zayd be able to bounce back in time?

Discussion Questions

1. At the end of the first chapter, Zayd comments, “I can only imagine incredible things ahead of me.” How does the reality of what happens next compare with his expectations? What can you learn from Zayd about how to deal with disappointment or setbacks?
2. Explain how Zayd gets injured. What does the doctor tell him about recovering from his injury? How does Zayd react to the news?
3. What does Zayd think is the most difficult thing about being injured? Have you ever been injured? What was the most difficult thing for you? What advice would you give to Zayd about dealing with his injury?
4. Why does Baba say that Zayd should still go to practice even though he can’t play basketball? Why doesn’t Zayd want to go? What do you think Zayd should do?
5. What does Adam do to show Zayd that he is a good friend? How do you show your friends that you support them?
6. Why is Zayd nervous about his team facing the Lightning? Does being nervous impact his actions?
7. What is a *dbolke* ceremony? Why does Zayd’s mother tell Baba and Zayd that they need to attend the ceremony?
8. What happens to Nana Abu at the *dbolke* ceremony? How can you tell that Zayd’s family cares about Nana Abu?
9. Zayd’s favorite basketball player is John Wall; whenever Zayd tries to make decisions, he often thinks about how Wall would handle the situation. What does Zayd realize about the way that Wall leads his team? Is there someone you look to as an example or role model? How have they impacted your choices or actions?
10. When Zayd is injured, how does Coach Wheeler treat him? Why do you think Coach treats him that way? What does this experience teach Zayd about leadership?

11. What does Zayd notice about Sam? Why does he hesitate to give Sam feedback about how to improve his game? Are you comfortable giving your peers constructive criticism? Explain your answer.
12. What does Zayd realize about dancing and basketball as he's preparing for Uncle Mamoo's *mehndi*? Are you surprised by this realization?
13. How do Zara and Zayd trick Nana Abu into getting his exercise? Why do you think Nana Abu enjoys teaching his grandchildren about cricket? Have you ever taken the time to ask the older adults in your life about the activities they enjoyed when they were young? If so, what did you learn? If not, what do you think they might say?
14. Why is Zayd nervous about playing basketball after his injury? How does it impact the way he plays? Have you ever been afraid after an illness or injury? How did you overcome your fear?
15. How does Sam respond when Zayd finally gets up the courage to give him feedback on his game? How do you think you would have reacted if you were in Sam's place?
16. Why do you think Coach Wheeler compliments Zayd on his leadership skills even though he has been injured and hasn't been playing basketball? Explain how Zayd demonstrates leadership.
17. What advice does Nana Abu share with Zayd before the championship game? How does this advice relate to the challenges Zayd faces? How could you relate this advice to your own life?
18. If you've read the other books in this series, discuss the ways that Zayd changes in each book. What lessons has he learned? What lessons do you think he still needs to learn? If you haven't read the previous books, predict what lessons he might learn next.

Extension Activities

1. In the first chapter, Zayd's family struggles to assemble a basketball hoop. Why do you think it can be difficult to understand a list of instructions? When do you think video instructions might be more helpful than written instructions? Why do you think that? Working alone or with a partner, prepare your own video tutorial teaching others to do something you know how to do particularly well. Write down the instructions, and then film each other demonstrating the steps.
2. *Bounce Back* includes descriptions of a Pakistani wedding. Research wedding traditions in Pakistan. What happens during the *mehndi* ceremony? What happens during the wedding ceremony? Find a Pakistani tradition that you think is especially interesting, and explain its significance and why you like it.
3. Part of Zayd's preparation for his uncle's wedding involves preparing a dance to perform for the bride and groom. Explore the phenomenon of Bollywood-style or desi-style dance; a good example is "Ballay Ballay Song" from the Pakistani movie *Bin Roye* or the video for "It's the Time to Disco." Try learning some of the moves before choreographing and performing a dance that would be similar to the one Zayd and his sister created for the wedding. Alternatively, make a playlist of songs that match these two styles and explain how you feel while listening to them. What kind of emotions do they evoke? Describe the rhythms and melodies.
4. After Nana Abu's heart attack, Zayd's family tries to get him to eat food that is good for his heart. Research the role diet plays in heart disease. What foods are good for your heart? What foods put a person at risk for heart disease? Name a few foods someone might substitute with others to improve their health.
5. Teams are made up of groups of people who play different roles. Zayd is a team leader, but being a leader is only one role that a person might play. Research the traits of effective teams and the roles that different team members might play. What do you think is your role in a team setting, or what would you like it to be? What are your strengths as a team member?

PRAISE

FOR BOOKS BY

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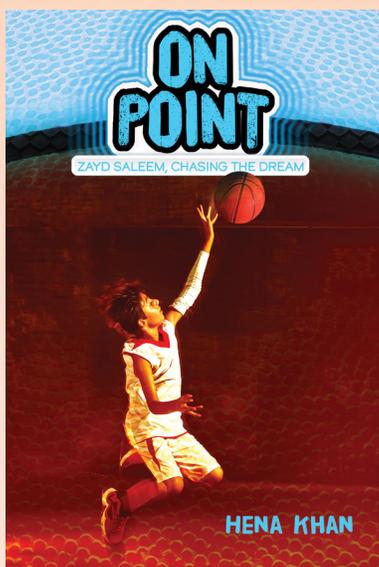
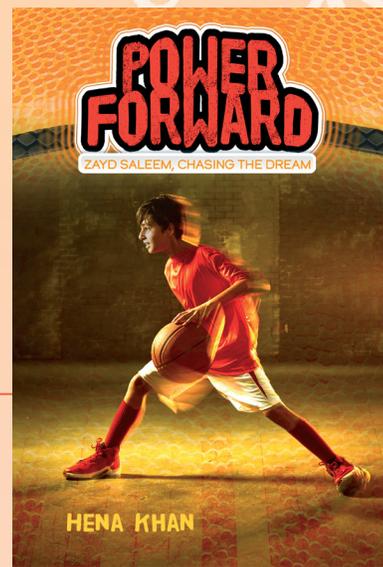
“A universal story of self-acceptance and the acceptance of others. A welcome addition to any middle grade collection.”

—*School Library Journal*

★

“Readers will cheer for Zayd and look forward to the next volume.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*



★

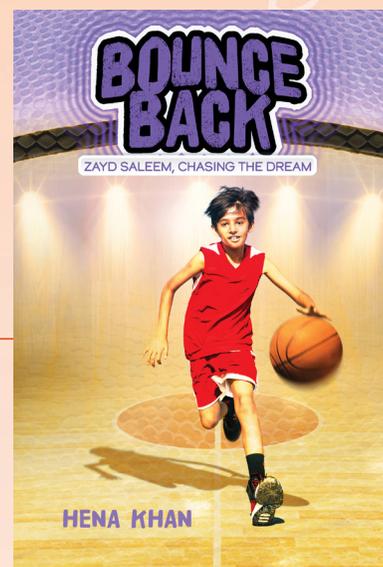
“A delightful follow-up from a writer who understands children, family, and culture.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

★

“Zayd is a welcome character for young readers, who learns that one can be a team player even when facing personal challenges.”

—*Booklist*



About the Author

Hena Khan is the author of several books, including *Amina's Voice*, *Power Forward*, *On Point*, *Bounce Back*, *It's Ramadan*, *Curious George*, *Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns*, and *The Night of the Moon*. Her upcoming middle grade novel is a modern twist on the Louisa May Alcott classic *Little Women*, available Fall 2019. Hena lives in her hometown of Rockville, Maryland, with her husband and two sons. You can learn more about Hena by visiting her website at HenaKhan.com.