

TEACHERS' NOTES

BOY OF FIRE AND EARTH

TITLE: BOY OF FIRE AND EARTH

AUTHOR: SAMI SHAH

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WORKSHEETS RECOMMENDED FOR AGES 13-17 YRS

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PLOT SUMMARY

Wahid's father Rehman Husain was a textile merchant in Karachi, married to Mumtaz. But Wahid's real mother, is a djinn.

Growing up in a city rife with corrupt cops and religious extremists can be challenging, and it gets downright dangerous once the djinns start hunting Wahid. To survive women with feet turned the wrong way, beings made of fire, and a violent terrorist sent to kill him, Wahid has to turn to the devil himself for help. But can Iblis be trusted?

What starts as a quest to save the soul of the girl he loves, ends up on the road to the dark heart of Pakistan's nuclear fears, and the coming of the Islamic apocalypse.

Islamic mythology blended with South Asian urban horror, Sami Shah's epic novel is filled with vivid insights into life in Pakistan, and a whole new pantheon of mythical creatures.

Boy of Fire and Earth brings together Sami Shah's *Fire Boy* and *Earth Boy* into one unputdownable volume.

This is a novel which explores the rich cultural history and political and economic instability of Pakistan via the prism of the magical realist tale being told.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sami Shah is a multi-award winning writer and comedian. His autobiography, *I, Migrant* (Allen & Unwin) has been nominated for the NSW Premier's Literary Award, WA Premier's Literary Award, and the Russell Prize for Humour Writing. His latest non-fiction book is *The Islamic Republic of Australia* (Harper Collins, 2017). He has written columns for national and international newspapers and magazines, short stories for anthologies, and documentaries for radio. Sami is currently based in Melbourne, Australia. thesamishah.com



WRITING STYLE

Title and Blurb

The book's title and cover might lead your students to form some perceptions of what the novel is likely to be about.



Activity: Discuss the perceptions they formed before, and then how they changed after reading the novel. Then design a new cover and write a blurb for the book.

Genre



Discussion Point: The novel tells a story of a Muslim family but the introduction of a djinn as a mother tips this seemingly 'realist' narrative into 'magical realism'. The publisher's blurb describes it as 'Islamic mythology blended with South Asian urban horror.' The author cleverly combines real events with magical sub-text. For example, the Dungeons and Dragons games Wahid plays with his friends metaphorically elide with the real magic. When Hamza has died and returns to earth he laments the loss of those games but his actions replicate those contained in them: 'The realisation that there would be no more nights like that filled him with fury. It was the kind of fury that Hamza discovered was only satiated when he killed more of those bearded fucks with black turbans who kept spilling out of the mosque next door and running at him with their guns spitting. Hamza had killed the first one in the corridor outside the room he died in, punching his head like an overripe grapefruit. Since then, he had killed two more in front of the exit.' (p 268)

When Wahid does internet research on djinns, he discovers a somewhat prosaic explanation: 'Returning to the Google page, he read the imdb summary of a French film in which soldiers in Africa come across a djinn and fought it. There were links to a running shoe named 'Djinns Chunky', and some blogs written by people discussing personal experiences with djinns. Wahid read through these and found nothing that was similar to his own.' (p 122) Wahid also finds numerous forums discussing calling a djinn (pp 178–9) which again suggests the porous boundary between realism and fantasy in this narrative. Discuss the ways in which the author vacillates between fantasy and realism in this novel.



Discussion Point: World building in fantasy requires credible detail. When Iblis shows Wahid the portal to Kaf he explains: 'Wahid turned it over for a few seconds in his head. 'So who put the stairs here?' 'In every city of the world, a place like this exist. Places where reality is thin. They tend to be abandoned areas, forgotten by the people of the city and so worn down that their existence becomes, well, vague. But in Karachi a place was put aside for just this purpose by your government.' 'By the government?' 'Well, by the army to be exact. Your army is your government after all, even I know that much about your politics. This is the only country in the world with diplomatic relations with Kaf.' (p 210) Discuss the elements of this 'secondary world' which were particularly well-detailed and crafted in your view?



Discussion Point: Horror as a genre is also explored in this narrative, which is littered with gruesome murders and tortures. What emotions or responses does horror as a genre seek to arouse in a reader?

Point of View and Narrative Perspective

This novel is written in third person, immediate past tense.



Discussion Point: How might this narrative have differed if it had been written from Wahid's first person perspective?

Descriptions of Landscape



Discussion Point: 'They exited into a thin alleyway between two tall buildings. It was different from the alley he had sat down for lunch in. Whatever meagre sunlight made it down was poor in quality. Exposed brick gleamed with moss and sweated in the heat, frog-coloured puddles of gutter water reflecting the tangle of wires above. The alley was full of children, most of them sitting in clusters down its length. Some played with rocks, trying to knock down piles they had assembled. A few played cricket with a broken plank and a balled up newspaper. Wahid could see the children who had been in the room with him, standing around a dead rat they poked with a stick, its innards spilling out through a hole in its side. The boy with the gun saw Wahid looking at them and stuck out his tongue.' (p 158)

This passage describes Karachi but uses techniques which demand that the reader use all their senses in perceiving what the city is like. Choose another description in the novel and analyse how it works and what devices are employed in the writing.

Similes, Metaphors and Other Literary Devices

The novelist makes use of poetic literary devices, for example:



Simile: 'The boy-shaped creature's laughter was like crumbling rocks.' (p 287)



Activity: Take note of and analyse other examples of the usage of devices such as metaphor or personification.



Discussion Point: Literary reference is another device employed, for example: ‘Such conviction. Well, what do you think of the djinns now that you know we exist?’ ‘I kind of wish you were the type that granted three wishes and went back into the lamp.’ (p 242) Were there other literary references which you particularly noted in this novel?

Humour



Discussion Point: Discuss the various humorous strategies available to a writer such as satire, irony, sarcasm, exaggeration, bathos, and black humour, for example:

Satire: ‘Lying? Why would they lie?’ ‘Because the only thing more powerful than a horny djinn, is a girl who does not want to get married,’ said the mullah, raising his cup of tea in a salute to these women. ‘They claim to be possessed and copy the signs of possession that they have heard of. That way they are safe to reject any and all suitors, for who would marry a girl that has been claimed by a djinn?’ (pp 100–1)

Irony: ‘Whenever he spotted a family playing in the sand, he would cut a wide arc around them. It was paranoid behaviour, but when you were being hunted by an enraged general, paranoia wasn’t just an abstract concept.’ (p 131)

‘You can see them?’ asked Wahid. It was starting to seem as though everyone in the city could see djinns. As though seeing a djinn was as common in Karachi as seeing roadkill.’ (p 160)

Sarcasm: ‘Iblis leaned against the railing, arms crossed as he smiled back at Wahid. ‘That’s just bad PR. And not everyone thinks I’m evil, you know. There’s a group of people in Uruk who started worshipping me some centuries ago. They created a whole religion around me, declared me a Peacock and said I gave birth to the universe in the form of an egg. I saw some of them in Dusseldorf a few years back. Nice people. Persecuted for their beliefs, of course.’ (p 201)

Exaggeration and Hyperbole: ‘In life, Hamza had liked reading the Economist, smoking copious amounts of hash, The Incredible Hulk comics, playing Half-Life, fantasising about life with his one-true-love Emma Watson, watching Hong Kong cinema, masturbating to Pakistani models, masturbating to a few girls in A-levels with him, masturbating to his English teacher, and reading Neil Gaiman novels. He had hoped to one day become a successful lawyer, even though he knew lawyers didn’t ever end up fighting morally glorious cases. Still, he was good at elocution, had been captain of the debate team in school, and had once even represented Pakistan in an international debate competition held in Singapore (he lost but it was a near-run thing).’ (p 267)

What other examples of humour (for example, black humour) did you discover in this text?

Conflict and Suspense



Discussion Point: What forms of conflict feature in this novel?



Discussion Point: What contributes to suspense in this novel?

Characterisation

Main Characters: Wahid Husain; Azah-zeel/Shaytan/Iblis/Balsa the djinn who gave birth to Wahid; Arif and Hamza, Wahid's two friends who lived in the same neighbourhood; Maheen Janjua; Badshah, the King of Karachi; Kamran, the assassin; Doctor J. K. Rahim, PhD; Ifrit; Dajjal; Allah.



Discussion Point: Apart from Wahid, which of the main characters was most vividly drawn in your opinion?

Main Characters' Biographical Summaries (Personality/wants/needs/goals/etc):

Wahid Husain: A clever and thoughtful young man who loves reading, dislikes partying, doesn't drink and has a secret love for Maheen. His ambition is to study business and recover his father's factories show his faithfulness to family and duty. When he is attacked by djinns he sets out to rescue Maheen's soul, despite not knowing her terribly well, again indicating his generous spirit. He doesn't wish to commit violent acts but sometimes finds himself forced into conflicts where he discovers his secret powers and the fact that he is half-djinn.

Azah-zeel/Shaytan/Iblis/Balsa the djinn: He/she wants nothing more than to be able to return to Heaven. Formerly Allah's adjudicator, Allah cast him out and banished him to earth when he objected to being asked to worship Adam, as Allah's perfect new creation. He/she has played many parts, and taken on many disguises and names, and has done the impossible in giving birth to a half-mortal child, Wahid. He travels with him and takes him to the entrance to Kaf, the world of the djinns.

Arif and Hamza: Wahid's two friends who lived in the same neighbourhood are unlike him except that they are all obsessed with Dungeons and Dragons. Their attitudes to girls are not respectful, like Wahid's. After dying they act as 'advisors' to Wahid, and Hamza actually commits several acts of violence to avenge his friend's desperate situation, and his own torture and death.

Maheen Janjua: A kind and intelligent girl whose life is derailed by the djinns' attack on Wahid.

Badshah: Born on the streets, this young beggar has inherited the title of King of Karachi, the city he knows so well. He has an uncanny ability to track anyone as he uses all his senses and applies them to the streets which he can virtually map in his head. His intricate plans to foil his oppressors entail a ruthlessness which enables him to sacrifice his fellow beggar Bina. He takes his duties seriously and helps Wahid when he is called to do so.

Kamran, the assassin: This man is pure evil. His employment as an assassin stems from an innate love for violence.

Doctor J. K. Rahim, PhD: He wants to avenge his wife's death and to punish the religious extremists who have destroyed his university, by ultimately nuking the world.

The Ifrit: One of the Ghul djinns who attacked Wahid's car and took Maheen's soul; his main concern is to find out why the djinns are disappearing; he charges Wahid with returning to Karachi from Kaf to investigate.

Dajjal: A false Messianic figure who will come forth before the end of time; he has supported the Professor's intention to create a nuclear war because of the prediction that he will be able to return to earth to rule once the world has come to an end. 'Dajjal was the anti-Christ of prophecy. Dajjal had one eye and the letters KFR on his forehead. Dajjal was trapped by Allah and would only escape when the end-times were near.' (p 231)

Minor Characters include: Wahid's father, Rehman Husain a textile merchant in Karachi; Reyman's wife, Mumtaz; Muzammil Bangash and his wife Mina; Tariq and Parvez; Hazrat Sulayman bin Dawud; Maheen's aggrieved father, a retired general; Laila, the daughter of Rehman's first cousin Imran Chacha and his wife Batool; Rukshanda, the girl at the shrine; the *mullah* named Maulvi, or Karamdaad; Rahat the man who looks after uncle Imran's beach house; Kulsoom, a beggar; Bina, another beggar; Commando, the beggar who takes Wahid to the sweet shop; Jassasah, an Allah imposter; Al-Munkar and Al-Nakir; Dhul Qarnayn, also known as Alexander the Great; the Qarin; a Ghul; the Si'lat; Major Ibrahim Daulat, the ambassador to Kaf; Allah.



Discussion Point: Which of the minor characters most intrigued you?

KEY STUDY TOPICS

Islamic Mythology, Religion and Culture



Key Quote: “We killed him. Not with a bullet or a bomb, the way we kill people now. But we killed him, yes. We decided he was not a Pakistani because of his religious beliefs and so we forced him to leave the country and he died of a broken heart. In Pakistan, religion will always be stronger than science.’ (p 85)



Discussion Point: Djinnns are a major element of the mythology explored in this novel. To understand them better read various definitions, for example:

The lengthy definition Wahid finds regarding djinns (p 122).

or

‘A djinn is a certain type of spirit in Islam, similar to an angel. Many Muslims believe that a djinn can take the form of an animal or a human. Muslim mythology includes angels and also the spirits known as djinns or jinns, which are described in the Qur’an as being able to interact with people despite being made of a “smokeless fire.” Djinnns are known for having free will, and for being either good or evil, like humans. The word djinn comes from the Arabic jinn, a plural noun that means both “demons or spirits” and also, literally, “hidden from sight.” The word genie shares the same Arabic root.’ (‘djinn’ Vocabulary.com <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/djinn>)

or

‘Well, Wikipedia has the same stuff we were always taught. Quran stuff, like, made of smokeless fire, can change shape, live in abandoned places and all that.’ (p 78)

What picture did you glean from these descriptions, and from others in the novel, of the key characteristics of djinnns, and of the several types of them listed (eg Marid, Ghul, Palis, Si’lat etc)?



Discussion Point: Wahid purchases and reads a copy of the Quran in the hope of finding guidance re the djinnns (p 180). But he eventually discovers that he is half-djinn: ‘Then, as Wahid stared at, it continued. ‘Well, half djinn anyway. Half fire, half earth. Your father was a djinn. Or your mother. Although, if your father was a djinn you would be more fire than earth. So it must be your mother.’ (p 187) What does this mixed parentage mean to him? Does it relate to other forms of mixed parentage in contemporary settings?



Discussion Point: Dajjal plays a key role in this novel. ‘Dajjal was the anti-Christ of prophecy. Dajjal had one eye and the letters KFR on his forehead. Dajjal was trapped by Allah and would only escape when the end-times were near. He knew all this because he had read it and had been taught it.’ (p 231) Research and discuss this figure’s significance in Islamic mythology.



Discussion Point: Religious extremists are mentioned in several parts of the novel, for example: ‘The dozen men in an apartment on Boat Basin have not yet committed the murders they came to Karachi for. Travelling from the mountainous north, they have all gathered here over the last month. Each is battle hardened; trained in camps in Afghanistan by cruel men with promises of bloody jihad. They have rained hailstorms of gunfire down on American troops outside Kabul, seen their brothers explode in marketplaces in Quetta, and hung women from poles in Swat. They are so used to the stink of death that they barely even notice the heavy gutter reek of a sewerage canal next to the apartment building they are now in.’ (p 238) Suicide bombers are mentioned (p 46) and (p 90), and in other parts of the novel. Did this novel make it clearer to you how extremism develops?



Discussion Point: Islamic religion has evolved like other religions. This passage explains that history: ‘Like in Egypt or . . . or Iran, or Saudi Arabia or some place. That’s where Islam started right?’ ‘This is true. Mecca is where the revelation first came to your Prophet. But that was long ago. Those places are the history of Islam. The future of Islam is being decided in your country.’ ‘I don’t understand.’ ‘Religion is a changing thing. It evolves, if you will. The core belief may be the same. The Quran is unchanging after all. But the interpretations? Those shift and morph according to the moods of the time. I remember when Islam was all about scientific discovery. Where Allah’s revelations were seen as a demand for innovation and ingenuity. Now, they are considered an abandonment of the same. ‘The factions and groups that define what the future of Islam will be are all gathered in Pakistan. All of them live in the city we have just come from. They fight over it, kill over it. Whichever group is left standing when it is all done will be the final decider. There are many, myself included, who believe that the Qiyamat will start in your country. Maybe even in your city.’ (pp 243–4) Discuss the implications of this passage and its relationship to the growth of extremism.



Discussion Point: The role of places of worship is also revealed in this narrative, for example, ‘Between them, the focus of their prayers and devotion was the shrine of Abdullah Shah Ghazi, the sufi saint who, it was believed, protected the city from tornadoes and cyclones and granted the wishes of the most devout.’ (p 92) Wahid visits this Holy place, and finds that it is also a refuge for the poor and desperate. Research the role of the shrine or mosque in Islamic religion.

Economic and Political Issues in Pakistan



Key Quote: ‘No seriously, listen to this,’ continued Hamza, reading from the paper, ‘Professor Javed Kamal Rahim, a physics teacher at Karachi University, recently published a paper detailing the practical applications of using djinns as a source of energy. “We know from the Holy Quran that they are made of fire, so why not use them to replace the dwindling coal resources?” says Professor Kamal. He is confident that if his experiments are successful, then Pakistan’s energy shortage will finally end.’ (p 45)



Discussion Point: ‘So you were born after Zia died?’ said the professor. Then, without waiting for them to reply, ‘Yes, probably in the previous democracy, yes? But you have studied history? You know about the decade of Zia Ul Haq’s dictatorship? It was different from Musharraf and his recent few years as dictator.’ (pp 84–5) Research the regimes mentioned in this quote.



Discussion Point: The Professor laments the work which earned him medals from the government which were presented by Zia: ‘Do you know what I did to make Islam stronger then?’ ‘No sir,’ said Hamza. ‘I was working on that nuclear bomb of ours. I was part of the team that got it to work. A technology that those Americans created in the forties that took our top scientists decades to recreate in the seventies and eighties. We could have worked on such great things instead. Pakistanis have wonderful minds, you know. Such wonderful imaginations. That Large Hadron Collider in Geneva, did you know it is based on principles set down by a Pakistani scientist? He won the Nobel Prize for his work; did you know that? A Pakistani. Do you know what we did to him?’ (p 85) He says further: ‘By the time Zia died, the field of science in Pakistan was pathetic. In the years after, it didn’t improve. No one wants to be a scientist in a country where you can earn money by being corrupt. And so all the students become businessmen and bankers.’ (p 86) Discuss the implications for scientists when regimes insist on religion overruling scientific discovery.



Discussion Point: Nuclear power and the arms race are integral to this plot. Research Pakistan’s history in relation to this topic.



Discussion Point: Wahid’s visit to the shrine underlines the poverty and danger of this environment. Security guards check the gate which was the target of a suicide bomber weeks earlier; beggars line the pavements inside and outside; beggars blatantly share needles at the entrance; and a beggar boy offers to mind his shoes while he goes inside. ‘Okay,’ said Wahid. ‘Okay. The forgotten and poor. There are lots of those in Karachi.’ (pp 147–8) What does this novel reveal about Pakistan’s economy?

Karachi



Key Quote: ‘Karachi isn’t just the people. It is also the city. And I am its King. Now go.’ (p 162)



Discussion Point: This novel is also a eulogy to the city of Karachi, a place dear to the author’s heart, as he grew up there: ‘Karachi was once a Sindhi city, then after Partition it became a Mohajir city. But in the last decade or so, Karachi has overwhelmingly become a Pathan city. I love that, the fact that who fills the city changes from generation to generation. And a lot of my friends who are of Mohajir background, or Sindhi background, are extremely ungracious about this change. For me, then, making the new King of Karachi a young Pathan boy was almost a jab at them for being so unaccepting.’ (Interview) What did you discover about Karachi from reading this novel?



Discussion Point: ‘Karachi does not need djinns and churails for all its horrors. The city breeds violence, acts of murder feeding like maggots on a discarded corpse. People walk like troglodytes, hunched over with Karachi’s pressure draped over their shoulders. Karachi feeds.’ (p 236) This is not a very positive description of the city and yet it is obviously loved by the author. Do all cities contain these conflicting elements in their make-up?

Corruption



Key Quote: ‘Wahid had heard this theory before. It was a commonly held belief that all the beggars in the city belonged to a mafia of their own. He didn’t know if it were true. Mostly he chalked it up to a coping strategy developed by those with money when confronted by the continuous onslaught of those without. There was only so much you could give out of guilt, after all. It was easier to believe that the act of not giving was somehow more charitable.’ (p 14)



Discussion Point: Badshah describes to Wahid (p 161) the scenario he has laid out which requires Bina to give up her life. The laws of this particular urban jungle give him as the 'King' the power to dictate how people should be punished. Discuss the fact that this sort of power derives from desperation which often forces children to commit heinous acts.



Discussion Point: The Professor describes the corruption of scientific research by the interference of politicians. Is this sort of corruption evident in our own country as well?

Treatment of Women



Key Quote: 'You love her? Yet you have hurt her. You all hurt us,' said the woman, not with menace but resignation.'(p 138)



Discussion Point: Women in this narrative do not fare well. Laila is possessed by a djinn; Maheen is badly injured in an accident caused by the djinns and doesn't recover her vital self; Mumtaz loses both husband and son to the djinns; Bina is forced by Badshah to give up her life. Is revenge the only possible response to such treatment?



Discussion Point: 'Your first kiss then. That is what I will take from you. A boy's first kiss is true. Only later does he learn to lie with it.' (p 142) Would you agree with this very critical statement about men?



KEY QUOTES

Choose one of the following quotes and discuss in relation to the themes which have been outlined above. Then write an essay on how this quote relates to the overall themes in this novel.

‘Djinnns are creatures made by Allah just like man, except they are made of fire and not earth like us. The devil – I mean “Shaitan” – is a djinn who was too proud to bow down to Hazrat Adam, and sometimes djinnns possess humans but there are good djinnns and bad djinnns.’ (p 25)

‘Imran smiled, ‘That is the Christian way, Wahid. In Islam we leave enough space for your father to sit up on the Day of Qiyamat so that he may be judged by Allah.’ (p 32)

‘So I lied. And since I lied, I have had calls from the religious affairs ministries and half a dozen TV channels. And all have pledged money to the science department. Most will not pay – Pakistanis love to promise money that they will never give. But if even half do, I will have money. Money I can use to upgrade equipment. Pay researchers’ salaries.’ (p 87)

‘You know, while the professor was talking, I thought of something,’ said Hamza. ‘Djinnns are religious creatures, right?’ ‘How do you mean?’ ‘Well, they’re in the Quran. Even the professor doesn’t seem to really believe in them. He’s a . . . man of science, I guess. Djinnns aren’t scientific, they’re from religion. Does that make any sense?’ (p 88)

‘A week before, a lone terrorist with a bomb strapped to his chest had charged the gate. Finding his path blocked by a lone policeman, he detonated his burden just short of the entrance. The brave policeman and the attacker had been rendered down to their atomic substance, but the casualty count could have been much higher had the attacker made it inside the mazaar. The local government had responded to the attack by installing a metal detector with a table next to it. A policeman sat behind the table collecting cell phones, while another tried to organise the visitors into an orderly line in front of the detector. If the terrorists had hoped to dissuade people from visiting the shrine, they had failed. The policemen were mostly being ignored as a mass of people pushed and shoved their way through and around the metal detector.’ (pp 90–1)

‘But where will I go?’ asked Wahid. He started to think of characters in books and movies who fled their countries to escape threats to their lives. They all jumped on planes and flew to obscure European or South American countries. He didn’t have any visas ready.’ (p 112)

‘Whenever he spotted a family playing in the sand, he would cut a wide arc around them. It was paranoid behaviour, but when you were being hunted by an enraged general, paranoia wasn’t just an abstract concept.’ (p 131)

‘I am what is left of the woman who dies at the hands of men,’ she said. ‘I am her revenge.’ (p 139)

‘Karachi had many rulers, but none styled themselves as kings, at least as far as Wahid knew. There were politicians who had divided the city into private fiefdoms, there were countless crime lords who controlled the underbelly – all those stolen cell phones and cars had to be going somewhere. But there were no kings.’ (p 147)

‘Iblis cocked an eyebrow at Wahid. ‘Your complaint is that you cannot deal with the creatures you have met? But why not? They are of your own people, are they not? Dragons and orcs and such are of foreign lands. I’ve never seen a dragon and I doubt they exist. Djinnns, churails, even me – we are all things that you are supposed to believe in. Yet when faced with them you are filled with horror and doubt? I do not understand the Muslims of the modern world. Your faith is only worthwhile if it is never confirmed, it seems.’ (p 213–4)

‘They aren’t really scary, I guess,’ shrugged Wahid. ‘Maybe in the past, but, y’know they look kind of like, well, animation. I know a part of me should be frightened of them, but I’ve seen scarier things in movies and read about them in books. Most of what I see here is like bad video game character design. It’s not particularly imaginative I guess is the right way to describe them. I’m sorry if that’s rude but it is what it is.’ (p 285)

‘The Pakistan government has had a working relationship with djinns for some years now. I am the fourth ambassador to Kaf, which should give you some idea how long this arrangement has been in place for. We do it so that we do not ever need to worry about our enemies using djinns to attack us. It’s paranoid, I know, but this is a world which rewards paranoia.’ (p 297)

FURTHER READING

Fiction For Older Readers

Saeed, Aisha *Amal Unbound* Nancy Paulsen Books, 2020.
Saeed, Aisha *Written in the Stars* Nancy Paulsen Books, 2016.
Saeed, Aisha *Omar Rising* Nancy Paulsen Books, 2022.
Satrapi, Marjane *The Complete Persepolis* Pantheon Books, 2003.

Anthologies

Growing Up Muslim in Australia Edited by Amra Pajalic and Demet Divaroren. Allen & Unwin, 2022.
Once Upon an Eid: Stories of Hope and Joy by 15 Muslim Voices Edited by S.K. Ali and Aisha Saeed. Amulet Books, 2020.

Non-Fiction

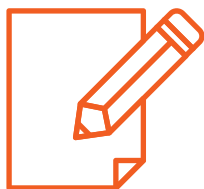
Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism (Issues in Society) Edited by Justin Healey. Spinney Press, 2017.
Haque, Tamara *Stories of 20 Mighty Muslim Heroes* TH Publishing, 2021.
Islamic Beliefs, Practices and Cultures: Muslim World Marshall Cavendish Reference, 2011.
Miles, Liz *Celebrating Islamic Festivals* Raintree, 2016.
The Illustrated Guide to Islam: history, philosophy, traditions, teachings, art & architecture Raana Bokhari and Mohammad Seddon. Consultants: Riad Nourallah and Moya Carey... Lorenz Books, 2012.

Internet Resources

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‘djinn’ *Vocabulary.com* <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/djinn>
‘Islamic Myth and Legend’ *Encyclopedia Britannica* <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Islam/Islamic-myth-and-legend>
‘Jinn’ *Wikipedia* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jinn>
‘List of Spiritual Entities in Islam’ *Wikipedia* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_spiritual_entities_in_Islam
‘Sami Shah: Author of Boy of Fire and Earth’ Interview Waqas Naeem. *Desi Writers’ Lounge Blog* August 15, 2018 <https://desiwriterslounge.net/blog/2018/08/interview-sami-shah-boy-of-fire-and-earth/n>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE NOTES

Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright AM operates justified text writing and publishing consultancy services, and is widely published on children’s literature, publishing history and Australian fiction. In 2011 she was the recipient of the CBCA (Qld Branch) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award for Distinguished Services to Children’s Literature in Queensland, in 2012 the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Distinguished Services to Children’s Literature in Australia, and in 2014, the QWC’s Johnno Award. She is President of IBBY Australia and Deputy-Chair of the Australian Children’s Laureate Foundation. In 2021 she was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia.



WORKSHEETS

Worksheet – Comprehension

Ask students to answer the following ten questions:

1. Who is possessed by a djinn in the third chapter?
2. Who gave the ring to Sulayman?
3. What other names does Iblis have?
4. What is Kaf?
5. Who is the King of Karachi?
6. What official role does Major Ibrahim Daulat play?
7. In this narrative who tricks Adam and Eve into eating the forbidden fruit (apple)?
8. What famous sweet store leaves offerings for djinns each night?
9. What does Wahid seek to recover from the djinns?
10. Who was actually harbouring the djinns and employing the assassin Kamran?

Answers: 1. Wahid's cousin, Laila. 2. Allah. 3. Azah-zeel/Shaytan/Balsa. 4. The other world inhabited by djinns. 5. Badshah, a child beggar. 6. He is the Ambassador to Kaf. 7. Iblis, the djinn. 8. Sohni Brothers' Mithai Shop. 9. Maheen's soul. 10. Professor J.K. Rahim.

Worksheet – Further Activities & Questions

1. Research any of the mythological figures described in this text.
2. What did you learn about the economic and political history of Pakistan?
3. Describe the origins of Islamic extremism suggested in this novel.
4. Research the role that the mosque plays in Islamic culture.
5. Research the history of Karachi and the elements of the city which you have observed in this narrative.
6. What is the relationship between poverty and crime as you have also observed in this narrative?
7. Women in this society seem to have limited options. Debate this question based on what the novel reveals about the treatment of women.
8. The violence in the novel is often used to pursue seemingly honest ends, for example, Wahid's pursuit of the djinns to rescue Maheen's soul. But is violence ever justified?
9. Nuclear power is central to the plot in this novel. What is the author suggesting about the nuclear arms race?
10. Research any other topic which you felt was raised in this novel.