

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 Builder

—
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 Builder

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.



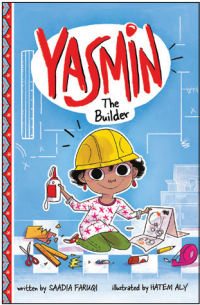
BEFORE READING

- **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 Builder

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 Builder

Reading Age: 6 - 8

Literature

Content: A schoolgirl struggles to come with an idea to help build her class's city.

CONNECT TO LITERATURE

Build Content Background

Engage Pupils

Make cross-curricular connections. This story can be approached from many angles: architecture, land use, and sculpture all play a role. Choose which approach fits best for your class.

- **Connect to Geography.** Before pupils arrive, hang pictures of different types of land use: urban, rural, and suburban. Explain to pupils the differences between each. Compare and contrast the way land is used in each. For example, in cities, people build up; in rural areas, land is kept building-free for planting. Ask which type of community they live in. Then, name local communities of each type. For example, if they live in suburbia, point out the nearest city on a map. Show some pictures as well. Explain that the pupils in this story are going to work together to build a city. Ask: *What elements do you think they should include?*
- **Connect to Art and Maths** To discuss architecture, hang photos of interesting buildings found in large cities, such as the Eiffel Tower, Buckingham Palace, and the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona. Include a Pakistani building as well, such as the Badshahi Mosque. Explain that architects are people who design buildings. They must be artists and mathematicians. They can envision what a building will look like before it is made. As with paintings, architecture can be many different styles. Maths helps design a safe building, in terms of weight support and angles that will stay standing. To demonstrate, place a book flat atop a standing book and show the difference when it is centered (will stay up) and not centered (will tilt or fall). If possible, show pupils a model city or building and explain that architects use models to test a project's appearance, and often times, safety.
- **Connect to Art.** Hang photos of different types of sculpture: carved marble, wood and a variety of found or recycled objects. Look for sculptures that illustrate different cultures and time periods. Challenge pupils to name what the objects pictured have in common (they are all sculptures). Ask pupils if they have ever made a sculpture. Explain that sculpture is an art form that transforms one material into something different, in order to express something or make a feeling. Let pupils share their experiences building. Tell pupils that they will be reading about a girl who must work with her class to build a city using sculpture. Inform pupils that after reading, they will collaborate as a team to construct their own city. They may want to begin thinking about what materials they would like to use, and what they would add to the city.

Discuss Text Features

Open to the Table of Contents and tell pupils: *Now we are going to read "Yasmin the Builder." On what page does it start? (page 5) Let's turn to that page, now.* Once at the story, have pupils page through it and study the illustrations and chapter titles. Ask them to make predictions: *What do you think will happen in this story?* Have pupils compare the text and picture clues. *Which did you find more useful to making your predictions?* Ask a volunteer to connect one feature with the prediction it helped him or her make.

WHILE READING

- **Make inferences.** If pupils have read other Yasmin books then ask if they remember who Mrs. Alex is (the art teacher). Explain that even without that knowledge they could have used text clues to infer who she is.
 - o Ask: *What clues could you use to tell that Mrs. Alex is a teacher?* (She tells the pupils what they are doing that day and also brings in materials with which to do it).
- **Synthesize information.** Set pupils up to synthesize information.
 - o Say: *Think about how Yasmin reacted to the idea of the art contest. Was she excited? How did she feel?* (No, she was worried).
 - o *How did the other pupils feel? How do you know?* (They seemed happy. I used the illustrations to make that guess).
 - o *Look at the drawing on page 9. How does she seem to feel about building a city?* (She looks worried).

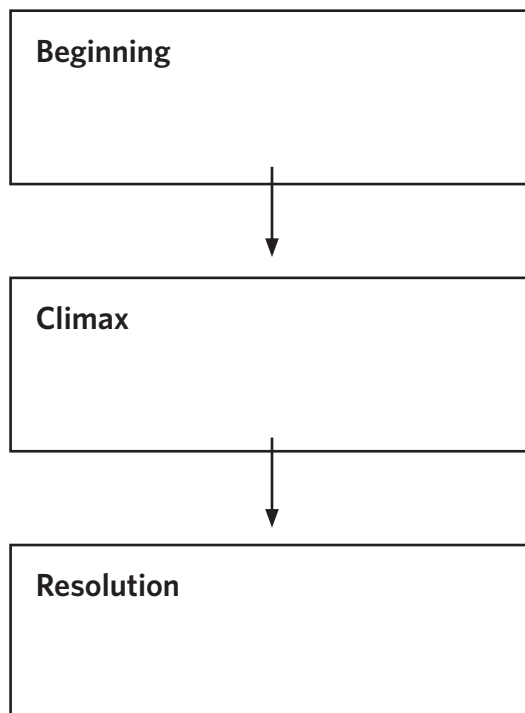
- o *What can you guess, or infer, about Yasmin's personality using her reactions in both stories? (In both cases, she was nervous while other kids were excited. I can infer that she gets anxious about big projects).*
- **Classify land use by type.** On page 11, Yasmin lists some structures she might make to include in the city. Draw pupils' attention to them: roller coaster, zoo and apartment. Ask for other buildings they can think of that they might find in a city (film theatre, places of worship, hotels, stores, museums, etc.) Keep a list of their responses on the board or chart paper for later use.
- **Use context clues.** When you've read to page 15, pause to make sure pupils understand why Yasmin finds this project "harder than she'd thought."
 - o If pupils struggle, point out Yasmin's response to Ali's castle, and Yasmin looking at Emma's church from afar.
 - o If they still struggle, ask: *What has Yasmin built? What are her ideas so far?* (nothing, and she has none). Guide pupils to see that she is frustrated that she cannot think of what to contribute to the group project.
- **Connect text to self.** Help pupils connect on a personal level to Yasmin: *Yasmin likes taking walks in the city. Have you been to a city? What do you like to do best in the city?* If your community is urban, ask instead: *Have you ever been outside of the city? What did you like about your trip?* Allow 2-3 volunteers to share their stories. Limiting the number of volunteers is an easy way to be sensitive towards pupils that may not have left their hometown or spent a fun day in a city.
- **Build emotional-social skills.** Ask: *Why do you think Yasmin sits in the corner chewing her lip instead of building? Why does she begin building just so she "looked busy?"* (She has no ideas, but doesn't want to get in trouble for doing nothing).
 - o *Have you ever felt a little behind on a project? What do you do when you're looking for ideas?*
 - o Allow pupils to share ideas and experiences. Encourage ideas that could help other pupils.
- **Study author's craft: Mood.** As you begin Chapter 3, introduce pupils to another aspect of an author's craft: *mood*.
 - o Ask pupils to give examples or act out charades of moods a person may feel. Explain that authors choose their words carefully to achieve different purposes. In this case, the author wants the reader to feel the same as Yasmin does.
 - o Slow down as you read aloud the description of the room in which Yasmin stands alone. Read expressively, filling your voice with the resignation that Yasmin feels.
 - o Point out to pupils the illustration that shows Yasmin looking out the window instead of building.
 - o Draw their attention to the words help establish the mood, like "Yasmin stayed behind," "quiet room," and the repetition of "There was..." to contrast the completed buildings and Yasmin's "messy heap."
 - o Point out to pupils that the author has set a mood with these word choices. To highlight this, reread pages 18-19 using slightly less precise words, such as "Yasmin stayed," or "in the room." Ask pupils: *Which sentences make you feel as downhearted as Yasmin feels?* Guide pupils to see that the additional words and details add to the overall mood.
- Before turning to page 22, assess comprehension by asking: *What event gave Yasmin an idea?* (She heard Mrs. Alex saying they would go for a walk later.) *Can you infer why Mrs. Alex is surprised?* (she sees whatever it is that Yasmin has made). *Do you think Mrs. Alex likes Yasmin's addition? How do you know?* (Yes, because in the picture, she's smiling very happily).
- **Make predictions.** Pause and ask pupils to guess what Yasmin has built. Keep pupils actively engaged by explaining their reasoning. Encourage them to use text evidence when at all possible.
- **Connect to Art.** Access creative processing by asking pupils: *What materials could Yasmin have used to make the bridge? The pavements?* (Pupils may answer popsicle sticks, cardboard, based on the illustration).
- Say: *Look closely at the picture (on page 22). Do you see that Yasmin left her original creation in the city? What do you think it is?* Pupils may have their own answers, such as a playground or water park. Explain to pupils another option: art for art's sake. Explain that many cities exhibit art to be enjoyed by its residents and guests.
 - o Ask pupils: *Think of art we have exhibited here in our school or community. Have pupils volunteer examples. What purpose does it serve? How does it make the viewer feel?* Tell pupils that some public art has a purpose: it memorialises a person, place or event. Other times, art's only goal is to inspire feeling in the viewer.
- Return the focus back to the book.
 - o *How does Yasmin feel now that she has completed her part in the project?* (She feels proud).
 - o *How do the other pupils feel about her participation?* (They like what she made).
- As you complete the story, use the opportunity to point out that all communities have different kinds of buildings. Some have parks, castles, churches etc. However, it is the people that make a community successful. Tell pupils: *Yasmin's contribution to the project may have been the most important, because she gave the people in the city a way to connect to each other.* Explain to pupils that they are the most important part in a school community.

Extend the Learning

- **Below-Level:** Place pupils in small groups. Instruct them to think of a structure they would make that fits into a city landscape. They should collaborate to decide on a building choice, and materials from which they would make it. Finally, they must work together to design the structure. The focus of this should be practicing collaboration skills. Each group member should be assigned a specific job on the project. Explain to pupils the importance of listening to the ideas of others, and compromising when need be. When they have finished, allow groups to explain their ideas to the class.
- **On-Level:** Bring in found or recycled objects, such as popsicle sticks, cardboard tubes and boxes, twine, and anything else pupils could use to create a structure and recreate the project from the story. Refer pupils to the list of structures you kept on the chart paper or board for ideas. Set the materials in front of pupils and allow them to engage in self-directed exploration. Tell pupils to collaborate a plan before building, to ensure that everyone's projects are different. When they have finished, work as a class to analyse the effort. *What else could we add to make this city more complete?*
- **Above-Level:** Have pupils research a famous architectural site (local or global) and create a multi-media presentation for the class. If pupils need, assign their topics. Allow pupils to research online in partners, but monitor their website use to be sure pupils are accessing reliable sources. Pupils may need a little time each day to put their projects together. Pupils may include photos or videos with their interesting information on each slide. Before beginning, collaborate with pupils on information they should include, such as location, age and why the site is important. The presentation should begin with a title page that also shows group members' names. Explain good presenting skills (talking loudly, slowly and using words the audience will understand) and good listening skills (paying attention, asking questions, and providing feedback).

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.